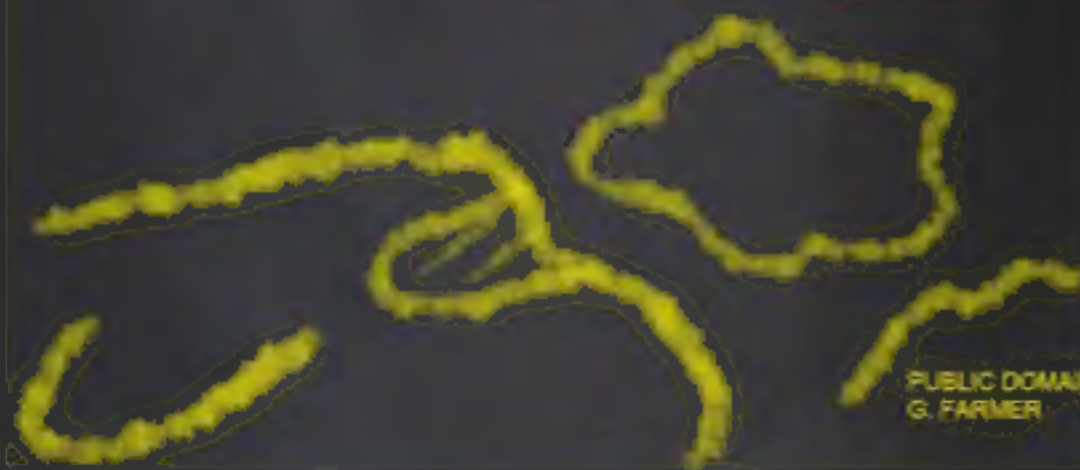


CALL OF UNITED AIRLINES

A HORROR
NOVEL



PUBLIC DOMAIN
G. FARMER

CHAPTER 1: TERMINAL 13

Pulling his luggage with a groan, an adult man was ready to board his flight. His feet ached and the crowded terminals were a bit overwhelming to the man who just wanted to get home. His brown eyes dotted from screen to screen in search of the one signaling his flight. "Ah. There it is" he thought when he saw the 11:50 flight at terminal 12. The man smiled and fixed his tie. He could see there was plenty of seats to choose from in the waiting area. "Looks like a quiet flight back home" He checked his digital watch. "Ten minutes until boarding. I better use the bathroom before I get on. It will be a long flight after all."

The man goes to answer the call of nature and makes sure to wash his hands. He was an important man back home where he was in charge of the city water plant. So he always made sure to wash his hands no matter what. Once he washed his hands the man stops when he hears a sound. "Is

someone there?" It sounded like someone was there in the bathroom with him. "That's weird. It sounded like someone is in the bathroom with me" he says to himself aloud but sees that he was alone. The man goes to leave but suddenly the motion sensor sink he was at before goes off again. "Geez, what a creepy bathroom. I better just hurry up to my flight." Checking his watch, he sees, there is still nine minutes to go.

Returning to the terminal the man is shocked to see a full line packed up to the door to the plane. "What! I was only gone a minute. The place was empty before but now it looked as if the plane was about to have every seat filled on it. A loud voice booms from the desk next to the entrance. "Attention everyone. The flight to Chicago has been completely filled" Confirming the man's worst fear he stomps the ground in anger. "But I already paid for my ticket! I was ready to board a minute ago. Not to mention if I don't get home in time I'll be late for work" He thinks quickly about what to do next. Maybe if he asked nicely they could let him sit in the storage beneath the plane. He wouldn't mind as long as he gets home. He looks over and sees a different desk.

The light on the ceiling flickers as the man rushes over to the other desk. On the wall behind the desk he can see the words "Customer Service" Relieved, the man decides he will try to see if they can help. Behind the

desk is a very fat black woman. She must have been 400lbs and she looked like she might have an attitude. The man gulps but decides he is only being judgemental and shouldn't judge if she looks mean or not just from a glance. "Excuse me" the man says to the black woman.

"Hi there, sugar" says the black woman "can I help you?" she asks. "Yes! I just missed my flight back to Chicago. I live in Chicago and I have to get back home by morning." The black woman moves her pudgy fingers to an old looking computer, which looked like it could have been from the early 2000s. "Happens all the time, sugar" she says as she types away at the computer. "Airports can be very tricky, you know, sugar. One delay and the whole system gets shaken up." The man sighs, remembering his friends back home who said stuff like this did happen often, so he didn't think too deeply about it.

"I can get you onto the next flight to Chicago. The midnight flight so that's only a few minutes from now" the woman, whose name the man just noticed to be LeShawna according to her nametag, says. "Wow, that's great news. Wait. You mean there's two flights to the same city and they're only ten minutes apart from one another?" The woman named LeShawna looks away like she heard something. "Oh. Um. Well, you saw how busy the last flight to Chicago was right? Sometimes airports have flights to the same city that are

very close in time to the other." The man nods thinking back to how crowded the terminal he was supposed to be at was. "I guess that makes sense. But if this flight leaves at midnight that means I only got five more minutes to get there" he cries out seeing the time on his watch.

LeShawna hits one more key on her keyboard and a ticket prints from the printer next to her. She rips the ticket and hands it over to the man "No worries, sugar. It's just one terminal over. No fees whatsoever. But this time you'll be flying United Airlines" she leaves the ticket on the top of the counter and smiles a big toothy grin "Enjoy the flight, Frank." The man whose name was Frank picks up the ticket. He looks it over and the ticket feels almost hot to the touch. The ticket said "United Airlines" which was an airline he had never heard of before but that didn't matter to him. He smiles, ready to thank LeShawna, but then he stops smiling when he realizes something. "Hang on. I never told you my name is Frank" he looks up from the ticket and sees LeShawna is gone. "She's gone?" He thinks to himself "Must be her break. You wouldn't think such a fat woman could sneak away so quietly but I've no time to think about that or how she knew my name. I've got a plane to catch"

Frank looks back at his ticket and sees what terminal he is supposed to go to. "Terminal 13? That's spooky. But I was just at terminal 12 so I

guess it's logical that the next number would be 13" Folding the ticket, Frank takes his luggage and rushes back to the main hall. He looks desperately for terminal 13 but doesn't find any screens pointing it out. He almost gives up until he spots a narrow hallway between terminal 12 and the rest of the airport. The hallway is long and dark. There were only a few lights on the ceiling which were far apart. "Maybe it's supposed be down there? I don't know why they would hide a terminal down such a long and dark hall. That seems like a terrible design choice"

Clutching his ticket, Frank knew he would fill bad if he missed not one but two flights in the same ten minutes. Especially after how nice LeShawna turned out to be for getting him this new ticket without charging him a cent. "I'm not some little who's afraid of the dark" Frank thought bravely "besides I can't be late so I'll just run down the hall really fast but not because I'm afraid of the dark but because there's only three minutes to midnight."

Racing down the dark hall seemed to go on for much longer than three minutes. A feeling of trepidation begins to creep up Frank's back as he realizes the hall was still going on. Looking over his shoulder it seemed like he was in an infinite hallway that goes unending in both directions. "I can't give up now. This hall has to end at some point" Frank ran as fast as he could

down the hall. He soon began to worry he had gotten turned around when he had looked back over his shoulder. He wondered if he was even going in the right direction at all. If he spent all this energy to just end up back where he started that would be pretty embarrassing. Luckily for Frank he and suddenly made his way to the end of the hall.

Terminal 13 was a dimly lit waiting area. Smaller than the other terminal stations and not nearly as bright as them either. The seats looked old and torn. Like they would have belonged on an old bus instead of a modern airport. There was also old wallpaper on the walls which to Frank looked like it belonged more in a haunted mansion than an airport terminal. "This place just keeps getting weirder" Frank thought. He saw there was no people waiting at Terminal 13. There wasn't even any airport workers. "Did I miss this flight too?" Frank looked at his ticket and saw there was a bit of writing he had not noticed before. The writing said "Insert into machine to gain entry. Welcome to United Airlines."

"United Airlines has an unusual approach to handling its passengers I would say" said Frank. The sound of a bell rung. It almost sounded like there was a clock tower directly above Frank. With a bell tolling for something. He checked his watch. "Look at that! Midnight on the dot! It looks like I made it just in time" Frank puts in the ticket at the machine next to the gate entrance.

He feels a chill in the air and a rumble presumably from the plane outside. Though there are no windows, Frank knows the plane is just about ready to leave. The ticket is accepted, and as the bell tolls, Frank boards the plane.

CHAPTER 2: MIDNIGHT FLIGHT

Entering the passenger boarding bridge, Frank was eager to find his seat and maybe get some shut eye, before he returned to Chicago. The boarding bridge was like nothing he had seen before. Not from any other airport, at the least. The passage was very strange. It reminded Frank of a certain twisted and colorful corridor. "This bridge looks straight out of that old Zelda game I used to play when I was back in high school. That one with all the masks in it. I wonder if this passage was inspired by that game. If it's not that's a crazy coincidence."

Finally Frank had arrived at the end of the bridge. He steps onto the plane itself, having never actually caught a view of what it really looks like. To his surprise the interior of the plane is massive. Three rows were inside

the plane. A middle row with three four's seats and the two window rows with three seats. "There must be forty rows of seats with eleven seats a row. That's 440 seats, if my math's correct." All these seats and yet Frank spotted two other people in their seats. There was no flight attendant to greet him as Frank took another step into the first walking lane of the plane. "Wait a second. The machine back there ate my ticket" Frank thought with confusion "Shouldn't I still have the ticket so I know where I'm supposed to sit? I guess you're allowed to sit wherever you want with United Airlines."

The walkway of the plane, had a very interesting carpet, Frank thought. The carpet looked like something out of an old arcade. Purple with strange colorful symbols on it. For a moment Frank thought he had accidentally wandered into a laser tag arena that was simply designed to look like a plane. "That would be pretty silly though, to design a laser tag room like a plane. Who would even think of something like that up?" A announcement that boomed throughout the plane "Attention, everyone, this is your captain speaking. Please take your seats so that we may begin our ascent" Frank still did know for sure where he was meant to sit. He decided to drag his luggage toward the middle of the plane and went to take a window seat. He put away his luggage in the overhead and sat down next to the

window. He still couldn't quite still what the plane looked like but the wing outside his window seemed normal enough.

"Now that everyone is seated, allow me to introduce myself" the captain's deep voice said the moment Frank had sat down "I am your captain, Nesmer. Your co-pilot today will be Zulu." Nesmer? Zulu? Frank thought those were pretty funny sounding names. Maybe Nesmer was India and Zulu was Africa. It didn't matter to Frank though since he thought anyone from around the world could be a really good person. He even knew some very lousy people back in Chicago. But something about the names of the captain and the co-pilot made Frank uneasy. "I'm just being judgemental because those are some exotic names" Frank thought "I'm sure they're ace pilots through and through." The captain's voice boomed out once again "Please direct your attention to our flight attendant who will cover some basic safety protocols."

A woman appeared at the end of the cabin. Frank found he had to check his eyes, for once he wasn't seeming something strange tonight, he was seeing what he thought was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She had lush brown hair and tanned toned skin. Her lips were full and pink while her eyes were dark and mysterious. She wore a tight blue steward uniform that did everything it could to show off her amazing cleavage. If

Frank were a school boy he might have made an embarrassment of himself then, but instead, he only blushed, and stared on at the beautiful woman.

Differentiating with the beautiful woman was a sudden crude robotic voice that was different from Captain Nesmer "Attention flyers! Welcome to United Airlines! Please make sure to fasten your seatbelts before takeoff! Make sure your phones are on airplane mode aA&#@!" Frank had to cover his ears as the sound of the robot voice screeched into a terrible sound. It sounded like an expensive iphone dropped into an angry blender. It hurt Frank's ears but he noticed the stewardess was completely unphased "What a woman" Frank thought as she held out a seat belt and demonstrated how to buckle it. Taking the hint, Frank did what he heard the robot voice say before it apparently malfunctioned, and he fastened his seatbelt, as instructed.

The stewardess then put away her demonstration seatbelt and swayed her curvy hips along the walkway of the cabin. Frank couldn't help but turn his head, and watch the beautiful woman, as she went by. Following her with his eyes, he saw the stewardess reach the back of the cabin where there was a wall with a metal door. "That's odd" Frank thought to himself "I thought planes had a small sitting space in the back for the flight attendants, but it looks like there's an entire other room back there. Must be a United Airlines thing" Frank thought, as he eyed the woman's ass before the

backdoor shut “Wowza, I should really talk to that woman and see if I can get her number. If anything I’m sure she has a great personality and would be fun to talk to”

“Folks” the voice of Captain Nesmer suddenly returned with what sounded like a snort “we will now begin takeoff, thank you...for choosing United Airlines” Frank felt a rumble throughout the cabin. The cabin shook with what he assumed was the plane beginning to drive out onto its runway. “Boy am I lucky. I might have missed my first flight but thanks to United Airlines I only lost ten minutes of my time. That’s no big deal when you think about how many minutes people go through in their entire lives” The shaking feeling intensified, and just as Frank had lowered his guard, he felt a powerful force hold him back against his seat. The plane was taking off, Frank realized, but it was at such an impossible speed. It was a ludicrous speed and Frank feared he would melt into a puddle in a seat from the sheer force of it all.

The midnight flight had begun with a midnight fright. Frank’s heart was pounding like a drum at a rock concert. Frank looks out the window and he sees they were already up in the sky but could not look to see how far above the planet Earth they were. “So...strained...can’t” Frank thought his brain was about to explode into a series of fireworks but before any grand

finale could begin he felt the plane even out flatly in an instant, and began moving at a regular plane speed. Frank realized he was sank in his seat now with his legs stretched out “Man! What was that all about? I’ve flown a few times before but I’ve never experienced anything like that! That was more like a roller coaster ride than a takeoff” Frank thinks.

Frank readjusts himself in his seat and takes a breath of air. He had never heard of United Airlines before this night and he begins to wonder how its reputation never found his ears of this was considered normal. “Looks like I’ll have an interesting story to tell everyone back at the water plant I work at. I’m sure it’ll all be smooth sailing from here on out. Or rather smooth flying ha-ha” Free to move his body again, Frank looks out the window and sees the plane is above the clouds. The sky is a dark black except for the moon. The full moon was huge in the sky. Larger than Frank had ever seen it “Maybe it looks bigger because we’re above the clouds. This is my first time flying at night so I bet that’s why it looks so big now.” Frank stares at the full moon out the window and begins to feel a disquieting feeling. The moon, almost looked to be a shade of red “Must be a blood moon tonight. I’m not sure I’ve ever seen one before now that I think about it” The large pinkish moon almost seems to vibrate as if it were angry it was being looked at for so long. Feeling rather nervous again, so nervous he could howl, Frank looks away from the moon.

Frank covers the window and thirty minutes pass as he tries to unwind. The voice of Captain Nesmer booms out again "Attention passengers" he snorts more rudely than before "we've reached altitude of 37,000 feet in the air, it is now safe to unbuckle your seatbelts and move freely around the cabin. We realize you have a choice when flying SNORT so

once again we thank you for choosing United Airlines” the captain finishes with a snort. Frank had to smile at that, “Oh brother, how much choice did I have in this when I missed my last flight?” Frank unbuckles his seatbelt, ready to stand and stretch his legs down the walk lane. His thoughts turn grim as he continues to think “Then again...how much choice *did* I have?”

CHAPTER 3: PASSENGERS

“Excuse me” a soft voice addresses Frank from the side “I think my phone died” It was one of the two other passengers on the plane, Frank saw. The passenger looked to be very young. Maybe still in high school, Frank thought, though he knew looks could be deceiving sometimes. Sort of like how he was worried LeShawna might give him attitude back at the airport. Frank was adamant that this young man was still a teenager however and he had a funny style about him. A long sleeved striped shirt with a rock band shirt over it, and black dyed hair that made the boy look kind of goth. The boy held up his phone which was as black as he was “I thought maybe it was stuck on airplane mode but it looks more like it up and died.”

“That happens to me all the time haha” Frank chuckles as he goes to pull out his own phone, having a pretty good idea about what the boy is about to ask. “Can I borrow-” the boy quiets as Frank holds up his own phone

"Let me see if I still have wifi. Phones can be tricky when you're this high up in the air" He flicked through his phone and saw there was at least one bar. "Only one bar" Frank says "did you need to make a call or something?" The goth teen nods his head "Yes! I have to make a very urgent call. I was going to call before I got on the plane but everything just happened so fast that before I knew it I was already onboard" Frank could relate to that. He too, felt events transpired very quickly and in a matter of minutes he went from missing his flight to sitting where he was now. "No problem, you can use my phone. Just don't go through my photos if you know what I mean haha."

"T-Thanks. My name is Adem, by the way" said the boy who turned out to be named Adem. He took up the phone and tapped his thumbs against the screen like they were tap dancing shoes on a dancing cockroach. Frank was amazed at how fast the boy was typing. "Must know the number by heart" Frank was thinking. Adem put the phone to his ear and let it ring "Hm. No answer. Oh well" Adem says "I just wanted to check to make sure I'm on the right flight. I had missed my last flight so I was really lucky to get on this one" Adem hands the phone back but Frank is more amazed than ever now. "Wait? You missed your flight?" Before Frank can quiz Adem further the boy is gone and in his place is the stewardess arriving with a trolley. "Anything from the trolley, sweetie?" The beautiful stewardess asks as she arrives with

her trolley next to Frank. "Gosh, I really wanted to ask Adem more about how he missed his flight and ended up on this one. That sounds exactly like my predicament" Frank thinks "Shucks, I can't complain though. Not when this beautiful woman is next to me now!"

"Hello" Frank says to the beautiful woman who was suddenly reminding him of an ancient Greek goddess who would be renowned for their beauty. The woman even had a feeling of importance that Frank couldn't quite describe. "My name is coke. Can I get a Frank?" Frank blushes then, realizing, what he had just said. The woman giggles however. "Don't worry, sweetie" she says "I get that all the time." Frank smiles, feeling relieved that the woman was laughing more with him than rather at him "Ha-ha, sorry, you're just very beautiful. My name is Frank though, if you couldn't figure that out" The beautiful woman nods "Oh, I did, sweetie. My name isn't Pepsi though. It's Ari." The name rings in Frank's head. It almost sounds familiar but he draws a blank and assumes it's just him being overtaken by Ari's beauty "That's a very unique name. If your name was Pepsi that would also be unique for a name. That would remind me of this book I once read before. It was called the Outsiders if I remember correctly. Anyways, Ari, would you happen to have a coke?" Ari shakes her head but her smile continues to shine, almost like a lighthouse in a sea storm "I can be back with

coke in a minute. In the meantime I was just about to hand out tonight's entertainment."

Just when Frank was about to ask what movie he is surprised by what Ari the stewardess hands him. "A... book?" Frank asks as he is handed a book by Ari from the trolley "Here. Have two" Ari says, handing a second book to Frank who holds them like he has never held a book before in his life. "Don't most planes play a movie for entertainment?" Asked Frank. Ari just smiles. She has a smile so beautiful Frank can't really complain when he sees it. "Me, personally, I'm really big on movies" said Ari "but here at United Airlines we hand out books for entertainment. You could say we're a little... old fashioned. But these books are compliments of the captain and co-pilot personally." "Was this what planes used to do for entertainment back in the day? Maybe I really am not that used to flying" Frank says. He looks over to Ari, eager to keep talking to her, and maybe, even ask to see a movie with her if she ever happens to be in Chicago. However, before Frank can doll out the charm, Ari pushes the trolley and it squeaks on toward where Adem was sitting.

Frank lets out a groan of frustration before looking to the two books Ari gave him. "Can't hurt to read these books a little before Ari returns with refreshments. Besides, I don't read to often, so maybe these books will

be refreshing in their own write” Frank thinks. Frank opens the first book. It’s about a centipede or something but he finds the story very dry and uninteresting. “There’s nothing exciting about this book” Frank lets out a yawn “I know books aren’t as exciting as movies or video games but there could at least be a little action...or maybe a twist?” He goes to skim through the second book. This book was named after a fruit but as far as Frank sees it has nothing to do with the food item in question “Well, that’s just darn right frustrating. Who the heck wrote these things?”

Frank investigates the two books further, and his eyes begin to widen. “Wait, these authors...aren’t they...the captain and the co-pilot? The captain said his name was Nesmer and this book was written by an...Ogden Nesmer. Is this a relative or are the people flying this plane shoehorning their own working into their own jobs? No. That would be crazy. It could just be a coincidence too. Or is there such a thing as coincidence?” Frank scratches his head and thinks “United Airlines is just plain weird, and I think it’s getting weirder by the minute. I should ask Ari if there’s some kind of connection between these lousy books and the people flying this damn plane.”

Frank peeks his head out from his seat like a prairie dog. He does so in order to spot Ari. He sees her talking to Adem further down the cabin. It almost looks like she’s whispering something into Adem’s ear. Frank almost

feels jealous but then spots the other passenger on the plane. He sees it's a man with black hair and, what more, he has a laptop in his lap. "I wonder if he's watching a movie. You can watch movies on laptops these days, so maybe he's watching one." Frank checks his phone then but sees there is no wifi "I bet that has something to do with being so high up in the air. I bet that's why Adem couldn't reach the person he was calling when I let him borrow my phone earlier" Frank lets out a sigh "I can't even get a signal on my phone. I should say hello to the other passenger. Maybe he'll let me use his email so I can let everyone know I'm still heading home, if I'm lucky he'll let me watch a movie in a seat next to him."

Walking down the cabin Frank says to the man "Hello, I was wondering if you managed to get wifi on the plane. My phone was having trouble before and oh..." Frank sees the screen of the laptop in the man's lap. He sees a series of colorfully animated ponies. The man slams the laptop shut like he was caught putting on women's clothing in the men's locker room. The man wears a cheap looking dress shirt and looks like he is Mexican. He seems young to Frank but, his eyes, however, have a crazy look to them "I don't know what it is about this guy but his eyes look crazy and was he just watching a children's cartoon about ponies? I think I've heard of such a show

but he's obviously not right in the head if he's watching such shows on a public plane" Frank thinks.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you, I'll just be going" Frank says. "Wait" said the man. He waved his hand "Sit." For some strange reason Frank wanted to gulp but instead he sits down next to the man he was just internally cringing at. The man points over to Ari "Do you see the flight attendant over there? Do you know what she told me when I first arrived on the plane?" Frank saw Ari was still next to Adem and was beginning to giggle "I wish she was talking to me instead of this weirdo" Frank mutters to himself, suddenly realizing the man next him had a rather annoying voice, a voice he seemed to be happy to go on and on with "I'll tell you what she said since I'm reminded of it now. She told me that when there are only a few people boarded on a plane, like there are now, then there is a sense of... comradery. You know the word? It's not an everyday word. It means there is a sense of friendship among us few passengers. I like that word. "Comradery"

The word Frank was thinking of was again "annoying" however he knew better than to be rude "Because there's only a few of us on this flight, I see no reason for us to be shy. It's kind of like we're the only ones attending a movie at the theater. There's no other strangers so we're basically allowed to talk as much as we want. My name is Lucas, by the way" "Frank" said Frank.

Frank worries he is about to enter an hour long conversation about ponies so decides to ask “Did you also miss your flight in order to get on United Airlines? I was talking to Adem, the other passenger, and he said he missed his first flight just like I did. I know it sounds kind of crazy when I say, but I was wondering if we were all in the same boat. Or, same plane I guess ha-ha...” It did sound crazy to Frank but if Lucas also missed his flight could that be considered a coincidence? Frank wouldn't know what to think then.

“I don't think so” Lucas said “I don't know. When I'm at the airport I just sort of go where I feel and I end up on all sorts of flights. Kind of like hobos who would train hop back in the day but I don't see any hobos around here, thankfully” Confused by what Lucas is saying, Frank desperately looks for Ari and an excuse to talk to her, but to the man's dismay, Ari is gone from where she was before. “How can you not know if you're on the right flight?” Frank asks, “Boy howdy” Frank goes on to think to himself “finally Lucas is here so United Airlines isn't the only crazy thing around here.” Lucas shrugs “Eh! Life's a party and I love to party. What about you? You live in Chicago? You look important the way you're dressed, I bet you live in a penthouse or something.”

Frank chuckles “No, I don't live anywhere so luxurious. I just live in a cozy little house. I work at a water plant so I can't afford a mansion or

anything.” Lucas nods “So... what? You just process water? Make sure pipes are working?” Frank sighs at the assumption “No. I’m actually a member of the city council. The department of...” Just then, Lucas sounds as if he was gagging on a hairball “Ugh! You’re with the government! I hate the government. Always telling people what they can and cannot do! As long as you’re not hurting anybody else what’s it matter what I do on my own time? Who are they to judge me?” Lucas starts to go on and on, Frank wonders if the man next to him ever shuts up. Just when he expects Lucas to ramble on about overthrowing the government, a squeaking sound catches both of their attention.

“Hello, gentlemen, I’m back with some refreshments” Ari says as she pushes up her trolley, now no longer stocked with books. “Thank heavens” Frank thinks “I was really getting thirsty” Frank says. “Sorry, sweetheart” Ari says “I don’t have any drinks but I do have your coke right here!” Frank makes a confused face “I don’t understand. You got my coke but don’t have any drinks?” “That’s right, hun” Ari smiles as she lays out a tray next to their seats. On the tray was several distinct lines of a white powder. Frank’s eyes widen in shock “Is that...” “Cocaine” Ari shouts for the whole plane to hear

"What's the matter? Did you want a straw? Ah! That's what you meant by drink, right? You wanted to drink it through a straw?" Frank feels his heart sink to the the bottom of his body "I...I can't be around cocaine! I'm an important politician for Pete's sake!"

Lucas rubs his hands together like a fly "Hey, I'm no prude" the Mexican man leans over and begins to rapidly snort the lines of coke off the tray as Ari tends to her trolley. Jumping up from his seat as if he were suddenly sitting on hot coals, Frank stands back in horror of what he is seeing. A man snorting cocaine! "Holy shit" Frank thinks "this guy is doing drugs!" He looks at Ari wiping down her trolley "This... this is a crime, isn't it?" Ari tilts her head "What do you mean, honey? It might be illegal on the ground but we are in international air right now so it is okay" Frank didn't believe it "I don't believe this... that... t-that can't be right... I'm just going to sit back down where I was" Frank looks back to Lucas who is about to snort a fresh line of coke. He sees Ari waving goodbye to him like none of this was a big deal. He looks for Adem but see his suddenly missing, likely hogging the bathroom, Frank realizes. "I need a nap..."

CHAPTER 4: NIGHTMARE

AT 37,000 FEET

“Open up, Adem” Frank says. He was at the door to the bathroom at the back of the cabin. “Come on, kid. I need to splash some water on my face is all” Frank was too afraid to ask Ari for a glass of water. Especially after watching her offer him actual drugs. “Just what the hell is United Airlines really?” The man knocks on the door again “Adem? You even in there?” Frank carefully opens the door and sees the tiny bathroom is in fact empty. Frank looks down into the toilet “Adem? Ah! What am I thinking? He wouldn’t have fallen through the toilet. That’s a crazy thought I just had, I can’t believe I just thought that. I must be shaken up by what I saw with Ari and Lucas. United Airlines seems like a cartel plane now.”

Anxiety builds up in Frank the more he thinks about what he saw,

“Relax, Frank. You’re a Chicago politician. You’ve seen all sorts of seedy things. On the streets and even in the backrooms. They hand out coke on a plane, well, whoopity doo, the world’s got other problems. Still, I wonder if the DEA would believe me that United Airlines just offers its passengers cocaine like that. Would I believe such a story?” Frank looks at himself at the mirror and notices the stubble on his chin “Guess I need a shave in addition to a nap” He goes to splash water on his face and exits the bathroom.

Frank sits back down in his seat “If Adem wasn’t in the bathroom... then where did he go? Ah, I’m worrying too much about everything now. What I need is some shut eye” Frank nestles into his seat on the dim cabin like a baby bird would its cozy nest. He lets out a yawn, tired from the long day, and all the strange happenings he had seen thus far “Just a little nap...”

Ready to fall asleep, Frank opens his eyes suddenly when he feels a disturbing chill. He remembers the window he closed next to him “Was I remembering the moon right? Wasn’t it also pretty large before?” He continues to wonder until he decides to finally lift the blind and see out the window. Outside he sees the night sky, the clouds, the wing of the plane, and a gremlin on the plane “Wait. A gremlin on the plane?” Frank leans over and sure enough he sees it. A little green and furry creature which looked to be wearing a Hawaiian shirt as if it were on vacation. It was stomping around

and looking around for something “My God” Frank cries “there’s a gremlin on the plane!”

Frank watches on in sheer horror as the gremlin begins to crouch down and scratch at the surface on the wings “He’s trying to break the wing and kill us all!” Frank frantically pushes the service button in order to alert Ari of what he is seeing “What can I get you, sweetie?” Ari asks when she arrives “Ari, I know this is going to sound crazy but you have to believe me, there is a Gremlin on the plane. Just look out the window!” Ari looks out the window with Frank but they see the wing without the gremlin “But he was just there...” Ari sighs “You must be tired, hun. I see all kinds of things when I’m running out of fumes. You want me to get you a pillow?” Frank gulps and shakes his head “Yea, a pillow would be nice. I must be seeing things is all...”

Frank massages his brows and thinks to himself “Maybe all the crazy things I’m seeing is just because I’m tired. That has to be it. Lucas snorting coke and then that gremlin I saw. I’m just really in need of some sleep” Ari returns with the pillow and Frank sinks his head into the soft fabric, “Thank you, Ari. I’m sorry I was so worked up before ha-ha” Ari smiles “Not worry, honey. Sweetdreams.”

Sweetdreams sounded nice to Frank. It was too bad after he settled into his pillow he looked back out the window and saw the gremlin right in

front of it. It was holding up something too. From its hand it was extending to Frank its middle finger. Frank jumped up in terror. Behind him he thought he heard footsteps. It was Adem, returning from wherever he was before. Frank grabbed at Adem's arm "Hey! What are you doing" Adem cries "Look" Frank cries back "before you miss it!" They each look out the window and the gremlin is once again gone "You mean the moon?" Adem asks "I can't see it behind the clouds but I saw it before" he breaks his hand away from Frank "You really scared me there, mister" Adem then goes to pull something from his pocket. Frank sees its a mixtape with earbuds attached to it. Adem goes to put the earbuds in his ears but before he does so Frank asks "W-what are you listening to?" "Just my mixtape" Adem says before leaving. Frank glares at the mixtape and notices the word "Gremlin Inc" on the device. Confused, Frank sits back down.

"That has to be just another coincidence, right?" Frank thinks "I'm seeing a gremlin on the wing of the plane and Adem just happens to have a mixtape that says "Gremlin Inc" on it? No... what if Adem is the one dressing up as a gremlin? I mean, he was missing a minute ago. Is he switching into the gremlin costume really fast? No, I only looked away from the gremlin a second time when Adem showed up the next second. But that mixtape has to have something to do with this..." Frank takes in a deep breath. He catches

something moving on the wing again out of the corner of his eye “Oh no. Okay. I can see Adem up ahead. Before I look I’ll call for service so Ari can see it this time for sure” pressing the service button again, Frank begins to look out the window again.

Looking out the window, Frank sees there are now two gremlins. There are two gremlins on the plane he realizes, and they are engaging in sexual intercourse. The gremlin in the Hawaiian shirt was pounding the female gremlin in the ass and they looked to be having a very good time “Oh no. There are gremlins on the plane! There are gremlins having sex on the plane! I have to look away now or else it would be really weird if I kept on looking!” With no other choice, Frank looks away just as Ari arrives “What is it, sweetie?” Ari asks. Frank, afraid to look out the window again, doesn’t even know where to begin. “I think you just like talking to me, hun” Ari says. Ordinarily, Frank would be more than happy to talk to such a beautiful woman, however, Frank had just witnessed two gremlins having sex and that did not make him happy “Water” Frank says “Sure, hun” Ari says.

With Ari gone, Frank looks out the window. He sees the two gremlins again. This time they are pointing at him and look to be laughing “They’re making me look like some asshole” Frank curses. He flicks them off and the gremlins begin breakdancing on the wing of the plane “They think

they can make me look crazy! Well if it's one thing I, Frank, am not. It's crazy!" Frank jumps to his seat and storms toward the pilot deck "I'll grab the captain or the co-pilot" Frank decides "or maybe I'll bring both of them with me. Planes have auto-pilot don't they? This is their plane. They must have protocol for something like this. Whether for gremlins or just people dressed up in gremlins, they'll know what to do!"

Before Frank reaches the flight deck, he sees Adem by the front, listening to his mixtape "You! Adem! What is it you are listening to?" Frank rudely rips the earbuds away from Adem "Hey, man! What do you think you're doing?" Adem asks as Frank puts in the earbuds "Does this have something to do with the gremlins? Is this some kind of gremlinpunk?" Frank listens but all he hears is white noise "This is... just static sound" Adem takes back his earbuds "It's called ambient music. It helps me sleep. If you wanted to borrow it you only had to ask, mister" "What ambient music is it of?" Adem looks away suddenly "Um. Airplane ambience" "But we're on a... ah! Nevermind, I need to speak with the captain."

Rushing up to the door to the flight deck, Frank barges in "Captain, I'm sorry to barge in like this but you have to believe me" Frank sees the backs of the captain and the co-pilot. They both are large but the captain in particular is massive, Frank sees. Broad body, bald head, and pointy

ears "Wait, pointy ears?" Frank mutters "C-captain, there's..." Suddenly, the captain notices Frank and swings his head around, revealing the face of a pig wearing sunglasses. The pig-man begins squealing frantically and angrily at Frank, causing Frank to stumble out of the flight deck and shut the door on the horror he was seeing.

"Pig..." Frank mutters as he walks away. Adem sees him and says "Mister, are you alright?" Frank grabs at his head and makes a face of apprehension "Gremlins on the plane..." Ari arrives next with a glass of water, "I have your water, sir" Frank walks by Ari and clutches deeply into his skin "No one believes me" he shouts suddenly "Gremlins on the plane and a pig! Oh God! There is a pig flying! A pig is flying the plane!"

Lucas stands from his seat "I've heard of this before. Flying induced insanity. Once you're high enough in the air the brain can start glitching out. It happens more often than you think. Why I won't even quote what the CEO

of Burger King was spouting when he suffered from F.I.I.” Frank goes to grab Lucas by the shoulders and shakes him “Stop it! Stop talking! Don’t you know pigs are flying!” Everyone watches Frank as he stumbles back to his seat “None of this can’t be happening. I am not crazy! What’s happening is... is... *unreal*”

Already expecting the worst, Frank was still not prepared for what he saw when he returned to his seat. The gremlin, as he expected, was back at the window, only this time its fuzzy ass was being pressed against the window. The gremlins was mooning Frank and he once again felt light headed “I’m going to... I’m going to...” like a hypnotic circle the gremlin ass wiped around the window and Frank felt his heart pound against his chest like it was striking for diamonds “Oh God...” his sight became fuzzy like the gremlin, and the sensation of his skin crawling enveloped Frank. That’s when he fainted.

CHAPTER 5: HOBOS

ON A PLANE

“Ouch, my head. It feels like I just spent the last night drinking tequila out of a barrel of vodka with the vodka still in it. Also it feels like someone bashed my head in with a rock” Frank mumbles aloud as he rubs his head upon his awakening “What a messed up dream that was. How long was I out for?”

A grouchy voice pipes up from below Frank’s feet “I don’t know, I only came here about ten or so minutes ago” Frank stretches his arms “Ah, ten minutes? I wonder when my nightmare actually began. Wait! Who said that?” Frank looks down at the ground and sees what looks (and smells) like a homeless man “Huh. I didn’t know they let hobos onto United Airlines. Wait! Aah! A hobo!” Frank jumps up from his seat. The hobo, likewise, jumps

to his feet, "Aah! A lawyer!" Frank composes himself and fixes his tie "Hang on, I'm not a lawyer, I'm a city councilman" The hobo fixes his gray beard and adjusts his trenchcoat "Well, you look like the lawyer who made me lose my job and house and then slept with my wife" Hearing the homeless man's troubled backstory, Frank feels a great deal of sympathy for him "I'm sorry, that sounds rough. I had no idea how bad it was for you" the hobo shrugs "All good, I'm Jason, by the way" Frank shakes Jason's dirty hand "Frank."

"I was just having one heck of a nightmare, Jason. Oh wait" Frank looks out the window and sees there are no gremlins after all. The moon, however, is out and is as large as ever. Putting Frank on edge, he covers the window. "Yea, you were saying" says Jason "How come I didn't see you before, Jason? I counted only two other passengers before" Frank said. Jason steps out into the cabin floor "Well, to tell be frank, Frank, I've been here since a previous flight" Frank scratches his head "A previous flight?" "Yup! In fact, I've been here for a really long time. Feels like years, honestly. It's pretty easy to get lost on a United Airlines flight. Anyways, I thought I'd try making my way to the front again. That's when I saw you sleeping. Didn't want to wake you up but didn't want to lose sight of you either so I hunkered down at your feet. Drats, Frank. Looks like that damned captain put up the blast shield again"

Frank looks out at the cabin. He sees a metal wall blocking the flight deck. He also sees that Ari and the other passengers are gone "The passengers I was with before are gone" Frank points out "Also, what's up with that wall?" Jason itches his wizardy beard "Oh man, you must be really new to United Airlines. You do realize you're on a haunted flight, right?" Frank couldn't believe what he was hearing "A h-haunted flight? Like, with ghosts?" Jason shrugs "I don't know. There might be ghosts. But monsters are a given. I've spoken to a few others before. The first hour is usually pretty smooth but right about now anything will go for you. Same with me, of course. The passengers you came on with, well, there's a good chance they were eaten" Frank lets out a gasp "Eaten? By what?" Jason smiles "No clue! Like I said, anything goes."

Frank takes in a deep breath, accepting the peril of his situation, even if you didn't fully understand it, "Hmm. Would you say that we're on a magic plane then?" The hobo Jason strokes his greasy beard "A *cursed* plane is more like it but yea, you could call it then. Magic is the best explanation for what I've seen goes on around here, which is, to say, a lot"

Checking the overhead, Frank is amused to see his luggage is still intact "Well, at least United Airlines doesn't lose your luggage" Frank grits his teeth as he looks over the empty cabin again "Damn this is all wrong, Jason.

There was a kid on this flight named Adem, and then there was Ari. A nice girl, probably mixed up with trouble in all of this. We gotta find them and land this plane somehow” Jason picks up a peanut he finds on the floor and pockets it “All well and good, Frank. My plan was always to get to the flight deck and land the plane myself. Every time I find my way back up to this point those damn blast shields go up. I’ve looked for a way to keep them down but no cigar. As for your fellow passengers, I’d be careful if I were you. As far as I know, there’s only one other passengers I came on board with still around and he... well, let’s just say United Airlines has changed him, and I don’t think for the better.”

“Easy there, Jason” Frank says “you make it sound pretty spooky, and I just got my nerves under control. Tell you what though. Jason. Why don’t you and I team up? We’ll have a better chance of figuring out how to get into the flight deck and finding anyone who needs our help if we work together” Jason chuckles at Frank’s proposition “A hobo and a rich guy like you working together? Don’t we make an interesting combo” Frank shakes his head disagreeing “Hey, now, I’m not rich. In fact, I think of myself as pretty average. I mean, not to boast, but I think I’m a little better looking than most but other than that I’m as average as it gets. Maybe my house just happens to be on the better side of Chicago, but really, that’s it” Jason begins

to snort "Hmp! If you've got a house, you're rich. But tell you what, Richie Rich. I've never worked with anyone else before so maybe a fresh pair of eyes backing me up is just what I need. Any idea where we should start?"

Frank looks over to the blast shields blocking them from the flight deck. The blast shields looked to be made of a dark metal and must of weighed a ton "You said it yourself, Jason. A fresh of pair of eyes, right?" Frank goes over to inspect the blast shield more closely. He inspects with the careful eyes required for his important position in government. He had done many important things for the city of Chicago and he often credited that to his careful attention to detail. He noticed then the strange runes engraved on the blast shield. They almost looked like scales pointing to something. He

followed the scales on the wall until he saw what they were pointing toward.

“There’s a keyhole” said Frank “there’s a keyhole on the blast shield, Jason. It almost looks like a... woah. It looks to be in the shape of a skull and cross bones. Now they’re just trying too hard” Jason comes over, casually knocking back a bottle of booze he suddenly had. He lets out a belch and says “Yup! The old skull keyhole. Sometimes the shape is different. Like you said, magic plane, using magic to change what key we need everyday” Frank sizes up the wall before looking back to Jason “So we have to find a skull shaped key within the day, right? Or else the shape on the door here changes?” Jason sighs “Seems that way, partner. Seems that way”

Frank smiles “Then we better get looking.”

CHAPTER 6: DEVIL CHASE

Frank and his friend, Jason, a hobo who had been on United Airlines for much longer than he had, both stand at the back of the cabin, “This must be where Adem was off to when I first had to use the bathroom. You’re telling me there’s more to this plane than just the cabin and flight deck?” A grim look forms under the gray locks of Jason’s hair “Much more, Frank. Magic plane... excuse me, CURSED plane. There are all sorts of horrors beyond this point and there’s no knowing for certain what awaits each time you pass through the doors here. Are you sure you want to progress? I understand if you wanted to take your chances back in the cabin”

A look of resolve forms on Frank’s chiseled face “Hey, come on now, Jason. We’re friends. You and I are going to stick together and get to the bottom of this plane. Or, rather the back of it. Are you ready?” Jason gives Frank a nod and together the two open the door to the back of the cabin,

which led to another room. The next room was a very long hall way that was dirty and looked like it was impossible to fit on a plane. Frank thought it looked like something out of Silent Hill except that it was real "Well that's spooky" said Frank "just how long is this plane? Or I guess it can be as long as it wants since we're on a magic plane" "Now you're getting it" said Jason "Whatever you do, Frank, just don't look back" Frank looked back "Why's that..." Looking back, Frank saw the door to the cabin was gone, and instead of the door, it was just more of the hallway, but going far off into the other direction. It was as if they were in the middle of a creepy hallway all of sudden, which Frank found creepy.

The two brave men march down the hall, sometimes stepping into puddles, and sometimes seeing cockroaches on the walls. On the whole, Frank felt it was like he was in another nightmare "It feels like I've only been flying United Airlines for an hour or two" Frank thinks "but now I feel like it's been a lifetime!" After an epic trek down the rusty hall, the two men arrive at a rusty door. Opening it they find themselves in a swampy library, which was like an old library but sunk deep in a Louisiana swamp for 100 years. There was even rays of light coming in from the broken ceiling which Frank thought should be impossible, as they were supposed to be on a plane, and on on the ground where light could seep in like that.

“Looks like a public library” Frank tries to joke, in order to lighten the mood of what was otherwise a frightening discovery, of the impossible sight of a whole library, attached to a United Airlines flight. Jason, at the least, does laugh “Believe me, Frank. Public libraries aren’t so nice” the two share a chuckle before stepping down the soaked stairs and onto the damp floor. Frank steps ankle deep into the green and murky water “Ugh, if I knew I’d be stepping into swamp water tonight I wouldn’t have had my shoes shined back at the airport!”

It was not very long before the two men learned that the swamp library was more like a swamp maze. There were very tall bookshelves and lots of turns and halls made up of the bookshelves, which made it very much like a maze, a maze they were finding themselves lost in “We’ve found ourselves in a real maze, huh, Jason?” Frank asks. He sees among the many bookshelves sunk into the ankle high waters, were also carry on luggage “Look, Jason. There’s luggage littered out all around here. Other passengers maybe?” Jason spits into the water, adding to the filth. It already looked like the water on the ground was comprised of all spit, not making much of a difference after Jason spit in it “Doubt it, not from others coming from before us, I mean. This is probably all the luggage from previous victims of United Airlines. This, Frank, is where the luggage from the cabin ends up” Jason says.

Frank feels a very disturbed chill then “Jesus, Jason. There must be thousands of brief cases and carry ons around here. We gotta put a stop to this crazy flight for good” Frank says “If we can even get off ourselves that is” Jason says.

Frank goes to look closely at the many, soggy books filling the shelves “I don’t think I know any of these books. These books seem kind of creepy too. Old and haunted looking. I mean, who even writes these kinds of books? Have you heard of any of these people, Jason?” Frank looks at the names on the spines of some of the creepy books “S.S. Hartely? Krakehead? Daniel Drabblovski? These are like books from an insane asylum and they’re written by the patients” Frank pulls one of the books from the shelves “Where do we even start with this skull key we’re looking for? If it could be hiding anywhere we’d have to check even...” Frank reads the cover of the book he pulled out “Decaptate All Devils? Who the heck comes up with these titles” Frank tosses the book over his shoulder into the swampy water. After a splash the water begins to glow where the book landed.

“Frank” Jason cries “What did you do??” The water bubbles and from where the book landed emerged a severed head. The head was the size of a golf-cart and had horns like a devil. Its eyes were bright red and its teeth were sharp. From the bottom of the head hung a series of human guts. More guts than any normal human body should have. The devil head screeched and

the hanging intestines began to whip around toward the two men. "Oh God!" Frank cries "That's the scariest thing I've ever seen! Let's get out of here!" Jason agrees "You don't have to tell me twice!"

The chase was on and the two men began to splash hectically away from the gruesome hovering devil head. They ran from the devil head but the water was slowing them down. The water was making them move slowly which only scared Frank even more as he felt the head get closer to him "This way, follow me" Jason said, leading Frank around one corner of book shelves after another. After a bit, Frank looked back and saw the devil head was far off behind them but still on their tail "Are we losing him? Hey, Jason! What's the matter..." Frank looked back and saw the issue. Though the devil head was far behind them now, they had cornered themselves in a deadend of bookshelves.

"We're trapped" Frank said, fearing what the head would do to him "Look up" Jason said. Looking up, as he was instructed, Frank sees the top of the bookshelf "We can climb, Frank! Here, I'll give you a boost!" Jason helps Frank up the first few shelves and the two begin to climb upward. Eventually Frank reaches the top and sees he is in the center of an immense maze of bookshelves going on for miles in all directions "This place is like a fever dream" Frank says. Jason grunts as he reaches the top "Look alive, buddy, that

D-head is still after us!" The devil head begins to float directly upward once it reaches the deadend. Organs begin to slip out of its bottom and Frank and Jason resume their escape. They run away using the top of the book shelves rather than the swamp corridors below.

The visage of organs splattering the ground burns itself in Frank's mind. Would the head eat him if it caught him? Would his organs join the rest? He was entering a state of super fear when at last his foot crashes through the top shelf he was running across "Ah! My foot" Frank yells out, since his foot is caught in the rotten wood of the book shelf. Jason tries to help free Frank but Frank only sinks deeper in the hole he made. "Uh oh" Frank says before he and Jason break downwards, crashing through shelf after shelf, on their way back down to the lower maze. Their fall is broken by the many shelves they break through and eventually they land on their butts on the soaking wet carpet below.

Just as Frank takes in a breath of relief over the fact he is still alive, organs begin to rain down on them "Ew! There's a spleen on my shoulder" Frank gags as he removes the spleen the devil head dropped on them "Better keep moving, come on" Jason urges and the two flee into the maze once more.

After a little more running, the two race up a set of stairs, though they were still on the main floor of the swamp library. However, it appeared

they gave the Devil Head the slip "Well gee, Jason. I don't think I'll be giving United Airlines a very good review after this" Frank chuckles at his own joke but sees Jason is quietly crouched behind a fallen bookshelf "What is it, Jason?" Jason puts a finger to his lips "Shh! Over here. You should get a look of this."

Frank moves over to Jason and sees what he means. Below, at a lower part of the library, was an open space. There was a gathering of gremlins like the one Frank saw on the wing of the plane earlier. The little army of furry gremlins were bowing down towards something. There was an altar made of bookshelves. On top of the book altar was a man dressed in a red robe. The man in the red robe had his back to the gremlins and Frank was not able to see his face. The gremlins, however, were worshiping the man in the red robe.

"Cults" Jason spits. "Do you know the man in the red robe is?" Frank asks "No" Jason says "I don't think I want to, either. Look over there. To the side of the altar" Frank does as Jason says and looks over. Just by the first group of gremlins are a few more to the side. The side gremlins are tearing through luggage and throwing clothes around "No way" Frank gasps "That's my luggage!" Jason gestures Frank to be quiet "Right, sorry. But that's my luggage, Jason. I recognize my crocodile pajamas I got from my vacation to India. Boy if you thought airplane food was bad" Frank says. "Nothing is

as bad as our situation right now, rich boy, and before you show me your vacation photos we're going to need to sneak by those gremlins. Look over there, pass the gremlins eating your socks, there's an exit sign."

Down another set of stairs, the two men, rush for the exit sign across the library. Frank runs down a corridor of bookshelves behind Jason when something grabs his ankle. A book with a large, muscle bound African American was sprawled out on the ground, with a large black arm reaching out of the binds, and latching onto Frank's leg "Oh shit, I'm being sucked into this book!" Jason, acting quickly, runs back to Frank and begins to frantically kick the black arm holding onto Frank. Several copies of the book on the shelves spring open and grab onto Jason with more black arms. Jason manages to break free from the shelf but suddenly a sea of black arms are grabbing for the two men, separating the two. Then, from the way they came, returned the Devil Head and his devilish chase.

"That guy is still chasing us?" Franks asks "The Devil Head never stops the chase" Jason said "You have to get to another room. If not, the chase goes on forever!" Frank falls back, trying desperately to kick his leg free from the black arm "This never ends! What do we do, Jason?" Jason smiles as he kicks off another black arm "He'll follow whoever is closer" Jason rushes

toward the devil head "I'll lose him, need the exercise anyway, you get to the next room and I'll meet back up with you in a few!"

Jason kicks some books off the shelves around him before sneaking through to the next side. The Devil Head slips through the new opening and chases Jason "What about me though" Frank yells out as all the books with black arms crawl for him. Finally, Frank uses his non-grabbed foot to kick the

black hand off his other foot. Free, he jumps up and dashes for the exit sign. A regular door sits under the exit sign. Frank looks back and sees forty or so black arms racing for him, using their fingers as little legs to reach him. Afraid by the horrific sight, Frank plunges through the doors and enters the next room, ready for whatever new terror awaits him.

CHAPTER 7: ZULU'S JUNGLE

Sometimes, when Frank was slipping off into sleep, he was struck with the sudden sensation of falling. It was a feeling that came out of nowhere and would take him by surprise. So close to sleep, he would be thrown back into the world of the awakened with quite the startle to his heart. That was the feeling Frank was feeling now as he fell from the doors and into a new environment.

With a splash, Frank rose from the water and found it was not the swampy water of the library but rather a beautiful scenic pond on the shore of what looked like a mighty jungle. He sees trees and colorful fruits at their tops, were all around him, and there was even a beautiful blue sky with lovely white clouds, above. It looked like a paradise.

“This place is beautiful” Frank says. He looks for the door he came from but instead sees he is stuck in the middle of the jungle. “I can't even see the ceiling. Are we still on the magic plane? Or did it crash? This is crazy, it looks like I'm in Africa. I've never been to Africa but I've seen pictures. Maybe one day I will go to Africa but maybe by boat since flying isn't exactly my thing anymore” Frank breathes in the fresh air and feels the warmth of the sun on his pale skin “Man, you wouldn't think I'm on a plane at all, and that sky is so majestic, it's like a painting. If this was a horror book you wouldn't think this sight would be in it, not unless it was a very avant garde horror book.”

Frank walks into the jungle and follows a dirty trail between the trees “I hope Jason is okay, I'm going to need his help if I'm going to find that skull key or rescue Ari. Hm, wonder how much Ari knows about this plane” Frank studies the flowers off the trail of the path “This wouldn't be a bad vacation spot if it weren't for all the horrible monsters after me. Now if only I could find a few beautiful women to take back to that beach back there.”

Spotting a flower more pretty than any of the others, Frank heads down the trail, and passes under an arc of ancient ruins. The ruins had similar scale-like runes on them, which Frank chalked up to being the motif of United Airline's darker side. Frank bends down to pick the flower up, already imagining giving it to Ari when he sees her next, when an arrow is

suddenly slung right through it. Frank, scared, jumps up and turns around and sees someone on top of the ruin he walked by.

“Consider that your only warning shot” the man on the ruins says. Frank looks at the man and sees he is wearing military fatigue fit for the jungle around them. He also wears a green beret hat and has a bow and arrow in hand “Wait, don’t I know you” Frank says “Sure I do! It was hard to remember at first given the pig squealing at me but I remember the large guy next to him well enough. You’re the co-pilot of this mad flight. Zulu, right?”

The man scoffs smugly “Zulu. Zulu Apustaja and this is my jungle” Frank, sensing the danger, takes a step back “Aren’t you supposed to be behind that blast shield, flying the plane?” Zulu gives an evil grin “Flying the plane? Ha, sure, but I think Nesmer can handle it. You though, you what I’m going to handle” Zulu draws his bow and takes aim at Frank “Any last words, Frank?” Frank answers with a gulp before jumping out of the arrows way. Just like the Devil head, Frank was again running for his life, all while Zulu’s mad laughter echoes throughout his jungle.

Running like a gazelle on fire, Frank sprints into the wilds of the jungle. An arrow hits the tree to the side. Frank looks but he looks for too long and falls into a trap on the ground. A net springs and Frank is left upside down “Oh God, Oh No” Frank yells out. An exotic bird, looking like a certain cereal

mascot, lands next to a rock by Frank "H-hey! Hey parrot! Can you give me a hand?" Frank asks. "Give you a hand? I only have wings RAAHH!" The parrot says. "Very funny" Frank says sarcastically "but can you chew through this rope around my ankle? This maniac is about to kill me" Frank says "Welcome to the jungle RAAHHH!" Frank rolls his eyes "Hilarious. Now come on, help a guy out? My life's been flipped upside down if you know what I mean. I don't have any crackers but I got some gum I can give you" The parrot tilts its head "Well, I've never had gum before, so I guess I can help you out, but just this once."

The parrot flies up to the branch holding the rope. He chews the rope quickly and Frank lands on the ground. Frank takes off the rope and hands a piece of gum to the parrot "Here, for the trouble" The Parrot eats the gum and flies off. The moment Frank stands, however, another arrow barely misses his head "This guy doesn't quit!" Frank runs through more jungle but is more careful and looks over his surroundings in case of more traps.

Frank finds another trail and skids onto it so fast there is dust thrown in the air "Alright, back on the trail. Now where is this guy?" The gruff voice returns from another piece of ruins "Right, here, Frank!" Frank turns around and sees Zulu "What do you want from me, Zulu? I'm just a city councilman! If you don't like me then just vote for the other guy" Frank clears his throat

“Or girl.” Zulu smiles his evil smile again “Thought you should know, Frank. The trail you’re on is loaded with mines!”

Looking around the trail, Frank spots several mounds in the sand “Gee, thanks for the heads up” Frank begins to tip toe around the mines in the sand. Stepping very carefully, Frank gets midway through the danger zone Zulu had laid out for him “Oh yea, forgot to mention” Zulu holds up a remote device “I’ve got the detonator to all of them!” Frank gulped for dear life yet again, and Zulu clicks the button.

Not knowing what else to do, Frank jumps up as high as he can in the air. The mines beep and explode. One mine blows up under Frank and he’s launched even higher up in the air. Another mine that is launched up with him blows up and sends him up even higher than that. Again and again, like fireworks, Frank is launched up into the sky under the crackling of exploding mines. Yelling for dear life, he falls back to the earth with a trail of puffy smoke following him. He hits the ground with a painful thud and realizes “Hey, I’m still alive!” Then one last mine falls onto his chest, blinking red, and Frank goes cross eyed seeing it blink faster “Eek!” He puffs up his chest to throw the mine up before it launches him back with one last explosion.

Staggering back to the trail, Frank coughs up some smoke and dusts himself off. He sees a sign pointing to two different directions where the trail

forks. One half pointed to the left with a bunch of skulls reading "Temple of Gloom" while the other had paintings of butterflies reading "Paradise Beach." Frank chuckles "Ha-ha, not falling for this trick, Zulu. I bet there's a bunch of traps waiting at Paradise Beach. Meanwhile, maybe these skulls mean I might find the skull key at the Temple of Gloom. I'll check that spot out first."

The trail leads Frank to a pyramid in the jungle. He runs up the steps to the upper sanctuary "Wow, this doesn't look like an ancient temple. It looks like an ancient temple turned into a meth lab" Frank says, seeing all the bottles and flask on the desks along the walls. A pale man with black hair and rounded glasses staggers out from a back room of the temple "A visitor! Yes, it's been so long since I had one" the stranger, who looked like a meth victim, held up a book that seemed to be made of human skin stitched together "the answers were always here! Yes, don't you see, visitor, the answer has always been here all along!"

"W-whats that in your hands" Frank asks "Oh this? Oh nothing! Just a book about esotericism! I've been reading it nonstop since I found it in the library! Don't you see? None of this is real! It's... it's... unreal!"

The word gives Frank an uneasy feeling "Look, I'm not here for any book club. I'm here to find some people or maybe a skull key" the crazy looking man taps a finger to his head "Hmm. It's only been me here for

the last few months. I like the privacy. The last people I saw were the last two survivors of the passengers I arrived here with” Frank gets a sudden suspicious idea then “Would one of them be named Jason?” The man gets excited for a moment but then a dour look forms on his crooked face “Yes, Jason... don’t trust him! Don’t trust anyone you meet... this place changes people... not for the best... in fact...” The crazy man pulls out a dagger and points it at Frank “Why should I trust you, hm? You’re after my secrets aren’t you!? Well, you can’t have them! I’ll take them to the grave!”

“Easy there, big guy” Frank tries to ease the tensions by raising up his hands “I’m only looking for a way out of here, and few folks I would like to rescue along with me. We could work together and all escape as a team” The crazy man lowers his knife “No teams. Jason and the other one... yes, we started as a team. Then those two tried to kill each other and the voices began, yes, the voices led me to the book! The book has shown me the truth! The other one turned coat but I’ve found my own way in all of this! I don’t need the real world! I have the book, hee-hee, I have the book!”

“What do you mean Jason tried to kill the other guy?” Frank asks “What happened to you guys?” The crazy man giggles then “Never trust anyone, I said. The plane... yes, it will drive you mad. But not me! I have the book! I am the safe one!” Frank sighs in frustration “I don’t have time for this.

I got Zulu chasing me and I need to..." The crazy man jumps "ZULU!? Zulu is actually here!? He is here and he's following you! YOU LED HIM HERE! I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED YOU Oh no! No, no, no..."

Out of nowhere, an arrow pierces the front chest of the crazy man. Frank looks to the door and sees Zulu there, his bow in hand. Frank looks back to see the arrow in the crazy man's chest blinking. The crazy man looks at the arrow as it blinks faster and he stutters out a simple "Oh..."

The arrow explodes and after the debris settles, Frank sees only the legs of the crazy man standing. The legs fall back and the smoking occult book lands on the ground. Frank sees the book's title page. He reads it for a moment and sees it says "Infinite Jest 2: Untimely Ripped" With no time to pick up the book, Frank lets it burn, and runs into the back of the temple.

"I just saw a guy die" Frank thinks to himself "He just... exploded! This place is crazy! This place is absolutely..." running down the curly stairs inside the temple, Frank feels the sensation of falling once again "AAH!" He lands on his butt and sees he's in a pit. The pit is filled with sunlight from the open ceiling and he sees vines hanging from outside. Frank tries to jump out or reach the vines but isn't tall enough.

The parrot from before suddenly lands on the ledge at the top of the pit "Bird! It's you again. Great! I need your help. Do you want some more

gum?" The parrot blows a bubble with the gum Frank gave him. The bubble pops abruptly "Sorry, shithead, you're out of luck. I told you I'd only help once RAAHH!" Frank stomps his foot "Don't be like that! What's it going to take to help me out again? I just need you to drop one of those vines down here and I can climb out! So what's it going to take?" The parrot thinks for a moment "Give me all your cash" it says "WHAT? What do you need all my cash for? We're in a jungle!" The parrot laughs "Give me your wallet or Zulu feeds you to the worms RAAHH!"

Frank sighs "Can't believe this" Frank removes his driver's license from his wallet "I'm keeping my driver's license though, I'm dealing with enough killer psychos that I don't want to deal with anymore at the DMV" Frank tosses his wallet up to the parrot and the parrot puts a talon on it "Thank you very much, fucko RAAHH!" The parrot drops down a vine and Frank climbs out of the pit and escapes the temple.

Back on the trail, Frank sees another sign pointing to Paradise Beach "I thought the Temple of Gloom would throw me a bone but instead I lost my wallet and gained a decade worth of therapy. I trip to the beach might just hit the spot right about now" Frank thinks as he follows the trail down to the beach.

Stepping onto the sandy shore, Frank sees a beautiful beach out of a

six star resort. Down the beach he sees a woman, sunbathing, on a blanket. Approaching the woman, Frank sees she has dark hair and a slender body. Her chest wasn't as big as he liked on women, but, apart from that, she was 10/10 knock out all the same. The woman had tattoos of butterflies running up her arm. When she saw Frank, her black lipsticked lips smiled "Hey there, handsome" Frank blushed "Hey there beautiful" He looked at the ground next to her "May I?" The woman smiles "You may"

Frank sits next to the woman and sighs from the aches he's feeling. He looks to the woman's legs and sees they're smooth and crossed with one another. The woman breaks Frank from his gaze when she says "Been a long day, huh?" Frank nods "Flight delays you could say" The woman giggles "Ah. Poor boy. I think I know how to make your day just a little bit better" Frank smiles "Oh yea? What did you have in mind?" The woman leans closer to Frank "Me"

The woman kisses Frank passionately and their tongues dance within their mouths in a moment of spontaneous love making. Then the woman breaks from Frank's lips and she smiles a smile that belongs more to a demon than an angel "Ha!" The woman shouts as she uncrosses her legs to reveal a bulge "Got you!" Frank jumps to his feet in horror "It was a trap!?" The trap laughs "Haa-haaa! You kissed me! Now you can never say you haven't

kissed a guy!" Frank grabs at his hair in terror before his face burns to tomato red. He shakes his fist at the jungle "ZULU!!" The jungle laughs back and all Frank hears is Zulu mocking him.

Running more on anger than fear, Frank stumbles through the trail until he sees another ancient ruin. This time the ruin is at the end of the trail. The trail turns to a stone walk way with broken pillars and rocks. At the end of the ruin is a stone arc way with another door beneath it. Between the door and the platform above it was another "exit sign"

Frank feels relieved at the exit and his temper mellows. But then his heart sinks when Zulu appears on the platform above the exit, holding up a machine gun "Well done, Frank. You made it to the end of my jungle. Did

you enjoy your vacation? Because it's about to end!" Zulu takes aim and fires his gun on Frank. Jumping behind the first block of debris on the path, Frank narrowly misses the barrage of bullets.

Hearing the machine gun click, Frank goes in for the long haul. Frank has tears in his eyes as he bolts down the ruin path. Zulu resumes fire but Frank closes his eyes as hard as he can. He screams "AAAAHHHHHHH!!" and throws his body to the exit door. He trips, thinking he's been shot. Frank opens his eyes and sees a large rock he tripped over. Zulu reloads his gun. When Zulu tries to open fire again, Frank throws the rock and knocks the gun's aim off. Firing at the air, Frank throws his body again toward the exit and toward freedom.

CHAPTER 8: FRIGHTCLUB

“AAAHHHHH AAAAHHH AHHHH!” Frank screams at the top of his lungs as he hears his voice drowned out by a deep rhythm. Frank opens his eyes “Wha... AAAAAH!! AAAAAH!!” He screams now from the trial of death Zulu put him through a moment ago, but rather the new horrors dancing around him.

“What...I’m in a... a nightclub? F-f-for monsters!?” The room was dark between the flashes of light that revealed the many monsters getting jiggy with it on the dance floor. They were unleashing there monster groove in strange dances Frank had never seen before. There were gremlins dancing, and even smaller creatures which looked like bug eyed albino eleves. Then there were the creatures about human size. They had dark blue skin and pointy ears and looked like dark elves from that one computer game Frank used to play when he was in college. Gremlins, elves, and ghouls, Frank

thought “And they’re just dancing instead of trying to kill me?” Frank shrugged at the strange sight and bobbed his head to the beat for a moment. Then he went over to the bar.

Bathed in a pink lighting, Frank was amazed by the atmosphere. He had spent his life studying hard and working hard for his city so he had never been to a club before. Especially a monster club. Tired from all his prior ordeals, Frank leans against the bar to catch his breath. He nearly suffers a heart attack when he sees the bartender.

“Konnichiwa” the tentacle monster says with a high pitch and feminine voice. The monster looks like a yellow pile of stale pudding with tentacles and eye stocks sticking off of it. At the top of the monster's form was a bandana of the Japanese rising sun “What can I get you human-kun?” The bartender coos. Frank can’t help but cringe when the monster rubs a tentacle across his hand “It’s been a long day and I guess I could really use a drink so whatever the special is” The monster giggles “Like, you got it, baby” The monster pours Frank a drink but all too late he reaches for his pocket “Sorry, I just remembered I was robbed by bird today” the monster giggles “Awh, well, it’s, like, your first time here, hai? On the house, human-kun!”

“Thanks” Franks holds up the glass of green liquid “cheers” he drinks it and the taste of lime dances on his tongue like the monsters on the dance

floor. Frank puts the glass back on the bar and feels the buzz kick in instantly. The light flashes more rapidly as a fast paced synth song erupts across the nightclub. Frank looks over at the light show when he spots none other than Zulu cutting his way through the crowd. Frank's eyes widen and he rushes off in the opposite direction, cutting through another packed dance floor.

"He's still after me, I can't believe it" Frank thinks "This guy is seriously going to kill me if I don't shake him" Frank frantically pushes his way through the crowd of gremlins and ghouls, too busy dancing to the wicked music to even notice him. Looking back as he tries to escape, Frank sees Zulu loading a handgun and eyeing him with murderous intent.

There was no lyrics to the music, which Frank felt was strange. Instead the beat was loudly rumbling with a "BOW WOW WOWOW WOW OW WOWOWOW" all while Frank was barely managing not to slip over his feet from the reaper on his shadow. Somehow Zulu disappeared amid the flashes of the lightshow and Frank found himself before a giant screen displaying various images of the night sky. The screen stopped on a depiction of clouds clearing and a full moon entered the display.

"The moon?" A heavy weight fell on top of Frank then. At first he thought it was Zulu but then he realized his body was having some kind of reaction. He felt his body ache and watched as his nails grew longer before

his very own eyes “W-what’s happening to me?” Frank felt all his nerves tighten and he grabbed at his chest “Aah! Was it the drink I had?” He looked to the moon the screen and growled “ARGHH!” Frank staggered away from the screen when he saw Zulu standing within the busy dance floor “Damn... it...”

Frank runs away from both the screen and Zulu and sees another door along the wall. Looking up along the way he sees numerous birdcages with what appeared to be Kappas from Japanese mythology. The Kappas were dancing and spinning on their shells but Frank couldn’t watch for long. He put the insane club behind him and ran through the doors on the wall. The next room was so dark he didn’t even realize he had slipped down a slide and found himself speeding away from the club at near sonic speed.

The next thing Frank knew the music was gone and he was in a dark room. A single ray of light appeared and down floated what looked like a science fiction handgun “A gun... or is that a laser gun?” Frank takes up the gun and a series of neon lights turn on, outlining the arena Frank found himself in “Wait a second... Everything is still pretty dark but the lights that turned on are showing me where the walls and other objects are... hang on, this is like a laser tag arena! I used to play this when I was a kid growing up in Chicago. So there’s a laser tag arena below the nightclub? Well, I guess that isn’t the most far fetched thing I’ve seen today.”

“Raga raga!” A gremlin ran out from behind one of the walls holding a laser pistol. It aimed at Frank but Frank fired on it first with his own newly acquired gun. A red laser shot out from the pistol and when it hit the gremlin Frank saw a spark of fire erupt off of it. A spray of gremlin blood followed and then culminated in smoke rising from the wound left on the corpse “What? No way! This isn’t normal laser tag! That was a real laser and I just killed that gremlin! I’ve never killed anything before, what with being a Catholic and all. I... I...” Frank didn’t want to admit it but it felt good to finally have a sense of power in his situation “Self defense” Frank said to himself “If this is real laser gun and they also have real laser guns too then it’s all self defense.”

A green laser blasts flies over Frank’s head and he ducks for cover. He sees a few more gremlins arrived and are firing on him with their laser guns “Alright, you guys asked for it!” Channeling in his inner child, Frank opens fire on the gremlins and works his way toward the direction of the dead gremlins he leaves behind. It doesn’t take long for Frank to get the hang of the pistol, or to leave a score of smoking gremlin bodies in his wake. The gremlins try to overwhelm Frank with numbers but he is soon busting out sick moves and fast shots that cannot be beat.

Hardly ever breaking for cover, Frank blasts his way across the laser arena, ending all the gremlins who attempt to gun him down. He hovers over

his latest kill and picks up their pistol. Now armed with two laser guns, Frank duel wields and blasts down entire packs of arriving gremlins with his gun skills “Ha-ha! This is amazing! It’s just like a video game” Frank yells out as he sprints through the arena blasting down gremlins with two pistols.

“Maga maga!” A gremlin in a Hawaiian shirt gives orders to a squad of gremlins who wheel out a laser gatling gun. Frank finally is forced to take cover as rapid laser fire pins him behind the wall “I remember that gremlin in the Hawaiian shirt. He’s the one who made me look crazy back in the cabin” Frank feels a rush of energy and a thirst for revenge. He sprints out from another spot and goes to town on the latest gremlin assault. The gremlins are no match and the Hawaiian gremlin and few other survivors flee down a passage.

“Man, there must have been something in that drink, because I’m feeling WILD” Frank yells as he guns down more gremlins trying to escape. Frank moves down to the next stage of the arena. He sees the Hawaiian gremlin up on a platform. He snorts something off a table. His gremlin girlfriend from before tries to pull him away but he slaps her to the ground. He sees Frank and holds up a laser assault rifle and opens fire. Frank takes cover before an oversized rubix cube built into the floor.

The Hawaiian gremlin is more dangerous than the others, Frank realizes, yet he is still no match for Frank. Leaning against the wall, Frank sneaks in a shot on the Hawaiian gremlin and he falls back. Frank mercilessly finishes off the few remaining gremlins opposing him up the stairs to the platform and meets up with the Hawaiian gremlin bleeding out on the ground. Frank aims his pistols at the Hawaiian gremlin's head and says "Remember me, asshole?" before blowing his gremlin brains out to kingdom come.

Frank twirls his pistols like a badass outlaw before tossing them aside to claim the slain gremlin's laser rifle "Nice" he says. A laser blast sails over his shoulder. Below, on the other side of the floor he came from, Frank sees Zulu with several more gremlins "Alright, you want to do this, Zulu? Fine by me!" Frank goes to the table behind him. He sees a line of coke the gremlins had been snorting and thinks "fuck it." Already feeling such a rush, Frank plants his face on the table and snorts a long line of coke. He springs up and shouts "FUCK YEA" Frank hops up to the end of the platform and shouts "SAY HELLO TO MY LITTLE FRIEND" before opening fire on the enemies below.

The gremlins below practically burst into flames as Frank vaporizes them with the fast rounds of his rifle. Even Zulu ends up pinned to his position and halts his firing. Moving down the steps to the lower level, Frank

blasts down every new wave of gremlins that appear, and tries to find a shot on Zulu. Struggling to keep Frank back, Zulu practically shoves the gremlins out into the open in order to fight back. Frank, however, makes short work of each of them. After some time, only Zulu and Frank remain on the field. Zulu dares to run between cover and the two enter a dance of laser blasts and taking cover. The dance goes on until finally Frank manages to graze Zulu's side. He hears Zulu let out a cry of pain and a moment later the United Airlines co-pilot retreats into the next room.

"Where you going, Zulu" Frank shouts as he becomes the hunter "get back here and face me!" Down the latest corridor, Frank sees the gremlins fleeing from his sight "Heh, easy pickings" Pumped up like never before, Frank's quick hand guns down all of the fleeing gremlins. He finds more gremlins cowering in small rooms off to the sides of the halls. High on the drink of violence, Frank guns them all down "This is the coolest shit I've ever seen ha-ha!"

Like a reaper running behind on schedule, Frank goes room to room and leaves piles of dead gremlins behind. Eventually he comes to another room where two gremlins are holding each other, shaking with fear, posing no threat to him. One puts up its furry hand and cries "Moga moga!" Frank answers by bashing one's head with the barrel of his rifle then follows up

with the flashing lights of his laser blasts. He turns over and sees what must have been a dozen more gremlins lined up against the wall, cowering from his savage onslaught. Frank, starting to feel hard, raises his rifle "BONUS ROUND!"

As Frank opens fire on the lineup of gremlins, something happens. Like a light switch being flipped, the blasts of the lasers turn into bullets pinging off the ground and the laser arena is suddenly a classroom. Frank stops as sees the dozen bodies bloodied against the wall are not gremlins but in fact school children.

"W-what..." Frank desperately checks his surroundings. He sees macaroni art on the walls, the alphabet in bright colors, splatterings of blood beneath it. He sees, beside him, the two dead children he had just shot to

death. Over his shoulder, he spots a few children he missed, crying at the horror he had wrecked on what they thought was a safe place to learn and make friends. "I-I didn't... no... it can't be" Frank looks down and sees the assault rifle still in his hands "I didn't..." A loud voice booms over him "DROP IT!" "What?" Frank looks over to the entrance of the classroom. He sees several police officers aiming their own guns at him "DROP THE GUN! DROP IT!" Frank trembles, unsure of how to even explain what really happened, "I-it's all a misunderstanding, I didn't..." "DROP THE FUCKING GUN!"

Frank complies and the police quickly beat him to the ground and cuff his hands behind his back "W-what happened" Frank cries "The gremlins, man!" The officer above him glares down at him with disgust before simply commanding him to "Shut up."

CHAPTER 9:

CONSEQUENCES

It had been hours since Frank was taken back to the police station. His suit was torn off and a gown was placed over him. He was led to an integration room where the police cuffed his ankle to the ground. In the time he was alone, Frank grapples with what happened. All those bodies. All those *children*. "But how?" Frank asks himself, terrified of the reality he was facing "They were gremlins...I was on a plane... how?"

After a long, long time spent in what felt like limbo, the door opens. Frank sees a man who could be best described as well-built enter. The man had thick black hair and could almost be called a pompadour. His eyebrows were very thick and he wore a leather jacket over his shirt and tie "Alright, how you doing, Frank? You alright?" Frank doesn't even know where to begin

with his explanation "Am I alright? I... I..." He was utterly at a loss for words with the graveness of his crimes. Crimes he didn't even realize he was committing.

"Welp" the large officer goes in to take a seat across from Frank "let me get through introductions so we can move this show along. My name is Detective Woolston and I just wanted to go through the basic questions, verify you are who you are and all that good stuff. Formality, you know how it goes. Can I get your name?" Frank bites down on his lip in frustration "Frank. My name is Frank. Y-you know who I am already." Woolston smiles then, "Oh yes, I know who you are Frank" An eerie pause settles between the two before Woolston says "How could I not know you? My wife voted for you twice. You're a pretty big name in Chicago when you get through the Bears. That's also kind of why it's such a shame you're sitting here today for what you did."

"Woolston" Frank says "Listen, you've got to believe me. I didn't realize I was..." Frank pauses and Woolson cheekily finishes the sentence "shooting up a school?" Frank lowers his head "I thought... I thought they were gremlins" A serious look burns across Woolston's face "Yea, we're heard you talking about the gremlins when you were first arrested back at the uh... at the school you shot 30 kids at" Frank sits up suddenly "I was on a plane, detective! I was flying this airline nobody ever heard of. United Airlines! Then

everything went crazy and there was a jungle and a nightclub with monsters and I might have had one monster drink, I mean, a drink meant for monsters that is, and then..." Woolston looks at his notes "A bit of cocaine?" Frank nods "Yea, some co... wait..."

Woolston snorts rudely as Frank lowers his head in shame again "I don't know exactly what you think happened, Frank, but the courts aren't going to buy this crazy act bullshit. You've hurt a lot of people today. People looked up to you. You made some good changes to this city, I hear, and you blew it all away. For what? Polls weren't looking good? The stress get to you? Maybe this was your idea of slashing education funding?" Frank looks up, surprised by the dark joke Woolston was making "Children, Frank. *Children*. I got a kid. How do you think I feel about this? How do you think the families that *don't* have kids anymore because of you feel?"

With a grunt, Woolston stands "I'd say you've left a dark legacy on this city, Frank. Thanks for the clean fucking water but when it comes down do it, when the mobs come to wrangle your neck" Woolston gives Frank a deathly glare as he begins to exit the room "I'm going enjoy letting them let you swing."

"Don't I get a lawyer?" Frank asks but Woolston is already out the door "He didn't even bother with a confession?" Frank begins to sweat in fear

for his life “What’s going to happen to me next? This can’t be real. I’m not crazy! I’m not crazy!!”

Hours went by and Frank watches the sun set through bars of his new, and very uncomfortable jail cell. A biker with a big beard a cell over eyes Frank with a death glare. A large muscle bound black man licks his lips from the other cell over. Afraid for his life, unsure of very own reality and what really happened on the plane... or school... Frank miserably rattles a tin cup against the metal bars of his cell.

As the night drags on, a bell begins to toll across town, and Frank hears movements from upstairs, a swarm of masked men quickly swarm the building. The people are wearing masks that look like the gremlins Frank saw from his nightmarish encounters on United Airlines “No! Get away from me! Get away!” Frank cries as the masked men open his jail cell. They force Frank violently out of his cell as the other prisoners laugh at his cries for help. Outside of the police station, Frank sees Woolston, smoking a cigarette against the wall “Detective Woolston” Frank yells, while the now larger crowd of gremlin masked people drag him away “You have to help me! Detective please! What about justice?” Woolston takes a drag off his cigarette and blows a cloud of smoke into the night air “Sorry, Frank, but you’re no free man.”

Frank feels his heart drop when he sees a gallow erected in the park by the police station. The mob takes him up to where the noose hangs "Please! Everyone, stop! I didn't... I didn't know!" Frank sees from the crowd one man wearing a gremlin mask. He is wearing a gremlin mask and also a red bathrobe that reminded Frank of the cultist he saw at the library onboard United Airlines. He looked to be the leader and he was waving at Frank.

Fearing for his life, Frank yells out to the robed leader "You! Tell them about the gremlins! It was the gremlins, you have to believe me!" The noose is fitted around Frank's neck and he begins to hyperventilate "It wasn't me! I didn't kill your children! It was United Airlines! It was..." then the hatch opened and Frank felt a great fall.

CHAPTER 10: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Frank was screaming for his life when he realized he had landed on his butt. He was no longer at the scene of his own execution. It seemed the scenes had changed on him like fast forwarding through a DVD, only now, it was a different kind of horror movie “I’m not back in Chicago? I’m back in my suit and tie? So I’m still on the plane after all that. I guess that’s some kind of blessing, I don’t know how I’d live with myself if I had killed 30 children, in fact, I’d probably feel really bad about it. But where am I now?” Looking around, Frank sees he’s in what looks like a spooky haunted hospital with rusty walls and thrown around dirty sheets “Jesus” Frank cried “I thought I killed all those kids but I’m still trapped on this plane! Am I going insane like the other people here?”

A noise of something being thrown around is picked up by Frank's vigilant ears "There's somebody in a room down the hall? I guess I've got no choice but to keep looking around that skull key and the others. I sure hope it's not another monster though. Especially not another gremlin."

Frank tiptoes through the sort of misty hallway to a room on the side. The room is even rustier and danker than the hallway Frank was presently snooping from. The windows leading to the outside were a ghostly white as if there was nothing really out there. Below the windows was the back of a skinny man tearing through a cabinet "Lucas?" Frank asks. The man at the cabinet stops his rummaging and looks over his shoulder to see Frank "Ah, hello" Lucas stands onto his feet and pauses before going on again "I didn't see you there, Frank" he says, suspiciously "What are you doing in here? Are you looking for something in particular?" Frank asks, the skull key coming to mind.

Lucas crosses the room but he and Frank keep their distance from one another "Don't trust anyone" Frank thinks to himself, remembering the crazy man he met at the Temple of Gloom "I was looking for a parachute" Lucas says "A parachute?" Frank asks "Sure, a parachute! In my home country we would hold races for dogs but instead of sending them down a track we would drop chihuahuas off planes with parachutes. That's actually how I

came up with my plan to get out of here” Frank almost feels a sense of relief at what he’s hearing from the man in love with his own voice “Your plan to get out of here? Good, I’m glad to see we’re on the same page. After all there’s monsters everywhere here, Lucas” Lucas nods “Yes, yes, I thought it was a bad trip at first but the monsters around here are certainly real. A Frenchman has been giving me the most trouble out of them though”

“A Frenchman?” Frank asks “Haven’t met anyone like that. Don’t speak a word of it either. But that’s not important right now. I’m trying to find a key to the flight deck. Think our best shot might be to land this plane. It’s a skull key I’m looking for. You really think you’ll find a parachute around here?” Lucas shrugs “Why not? I’ve been finding all sorts of strange things here lately? You know, a part of me almost finds all of this... exciting” Frank gulps “E-exciting? You think getting chased around by monsters and having your mind messed with is... *exciting*?”

A dangerous smile slips onto Lucas’ face “Come now, Frank. A part of you must admit you’re having some fun in all of this” Frank feels a flash of anger before he suddenly remembers he doesn’t trust the man in front of him “I can’t say I find the situation as amusing as you do” Lucas frowns “Oh well. I’ve turned this place over but haven’t found anything here. I think I’ll try the library next.”

As Lucas goes to abruptly leave the room, Frank calls out to him “Hey,

wait! Stop!" Lucas stops and looks back to Frank "Have you seen Adem or Ari out there?" Lucas picks at his nose "Yes... I mean, no, I haven't. Oh and by the way, if you're looking for keys, I think there's a treasury through the dungeon. See you around, Frank" The mysterious Mexican man disappears into the hallway. Frank almost goes to chase after him but stops before getting to the door back to the hallway "What the heck is this guy's problem? Did he or didn't he see them? I'm actually trying to look out for the others on this plane... the others that are still sane at least" For a nervous moment, Frank wonders if he was still considered one of the sane members of the plane. He shakes the scary feeling off and goes to leave the area which sort of looked like a haunted hospital.

At the end of the rusty hall Frank sees a sign. The sign points to the left and reads "Dungeon" where the sign points right reads "Library" Frank sighs "I guess I know where Lucas left, and I guess, I know where I'm going next"

Frank follows the sign and goes down a set of stairs. As he goes down the stairs the rusty walls of the hospital slowly turn into cobblestone like out of a castle dungeon. There were even torches on the walls keeping the area lit. Torches with human skulls at the base of the flames "Skulls. Maybe I am going the right way after all" Frank thinks.

Opening a heavy oak door, Frank finds himself entering a true dungeon with stone walls, torches, and even various torture devices laid out all over the place “Man, this is the creepiest place yet, and I’ve been to horror houses all across Chicago” The dungeon is also cold in addition to being very scary looking to Frank but he wasn’t sure where the chill from the cold began and where the chill from the general scariness began “I bet the crazy people behind United Airlines are into this kind of stuff. I personally was never much into the whole BDSM scene but this place is like BDSM city... but on a plane.”

As Frank walks through the dungeon, passing lots of jail cells with skeletons, he gets another chill remembering the gremlins and Woolston “I still can’t get over that nightmare. I wonder if Woolston was in on all of this with United Airlines. Maybe Woolston wasn’t even real. How much of all this is even real?” Frank goes from one scary question to another, probably because of all the skeletons and shadows getting to his mind “Then there’s the whole question with whose behind all this? What do people want with a haunted plane? Who even is United Airlines and what do they want with me?”

Along the hall Frank sees an open room. In this room is a man chained to a chair. The man has long hair and wears a tie-dye shirt “Is that

a hippy? What's a hippy doing in a dungeon? A dungeon on a haunted plane for that matter" Frank thinks as he cautiously approaches the hippy but maintains his distance in case of any dungeon traps "Psst" Frank whispers "Hey, you awake?" The hippy raises his head "Hey, man, what's up? Why you whispering?" Frank becomes confused "Sorry, it's just that we're in a dungeon and... nevermind. What are you doing chained up down here?" The hippy smiles "Oh you know, just here with my girlfriend" Frank was confused again "Your girlfriend chained you up to that chair?" asked Frank.

"Yea, ha-ha, I guess it all looks pretty kinky" the hippy tells Frank "but don't get me wrong, I'm a pretty regular guy. I'm a journalist, you see. I work for a pretty popular magazine. Problem is I didn't come here for the big scoop, I came here to find my girlfriend. By the way, my name is Atlas" the hippy named Atlas says "Uh, Frank" Frank says, telling Atlas his name "You realize we're in a pretty crazy place? The fact you're so nonchalant about being chained up in a dungeon is also pretty crazy" Frank says "I've actually been in a lot of weird situations like this in my line of work, and besides" Atlas shrugged "why worry when worry won't help?"

Frank understands the point but keeps his distance from the chained up Atlas "Your girlfriend. What's her name?" Atlas smiles "Oh she's the most beautiful woman you've ever seen. Her name is GARP!" But her name wasn't

garp. It was "ARI!?" Frank cries as he watches Ari slam the back of a fire ax onto Atlas' head.

It was Ari. From the shadows. Blood pours down the wound on the back of Atlas' head. Ari had bashed the butt of the ax against Atlas' head. This was what caused Atlas to cry out but already he was limp and dead in his chair. Ari only smiled, holding her ax, like she was holding the buckle from the demonstration in the cabin "Ari" Frank says, with fear "y-you... you actually..." Ari keeps smiling and says "What's the matter, sweetie? Never seen someone bash the back of an ax into someone's skull?" Frank was so scared he felt he was going to wet himself. Stunned with super fear, he staggers away from the happy looking flight attendant, next to her murdered boyfriend "I do hope you've enjoyed your flight with United Airlines" Ari says as Frank runs back down the dungeon hallway, feeling terrified.

Frank runs through the dungeon until he is away from Ari. He finds himself in another scary room with more chains and other torture devices on the walls. In the square room Frank sees an iron maiden. An iron maiden, Frank remembers from school, was an iron cabinet with spikes on the inside. It was used as a torture device for criminals in the anicnet area. This one, however, was beating like a heart. Somebody was inside.

"When will this nightmare end?" Frank cries aloud "First Ari isn't the

sweet girl I thought she was and now I'm in a room with an iron maiden! I'm scared to even get close to that too. What if there's a monster inside and it's waiting to jump and grab me. Then maybe it'll put ME in there. I really don't like cramped spaces or spikes for that matter" The iron maiden doesn't respond to Frank, it only thumps with whatever was inside trying to get out "This stinks, I'm depressed over Ari being a maniac rather than a beautiful sane woman... but if I can't save her then I guess I can take a risk and save whoever is inside the iron maiden."

Frank swings the scary iron maiden open, ready to shut his eyes and perform some impromptu karate if needed. Instead of that, he sees a familiar body fall out of the death trap. Better yet, Frank realizes, the body is unharmed "Jason? Jason what were you doing inside the iron maiden?" Frank asks as he helps the hobo Jason back onto his hobo boots "It's actually really good for your back" Jason says as he does a stretch "Really?" Frank asks "No, you dumbass! It hurt like hell in there and I was stuck before you showed up. So, thank you for getting me out of that thing. If you're wondering what I was doing in there I was hiding from that pack of gremlins we saw in the library. They're on the hunt for stragglers right now."

Jason sees that Frank is giving him a funny look. He helped him escape the iron maiden but he sees that Frank is nervous that he out "What?" Frank

recalls what the crazy man said at the Temple of Gloom and how what he said, wasn't actually, all that crazy "Can I trust you, Jason?" Jason adjusts his trench coat and puts his hands on his hips "Frank. Come on, man" Frank persists "Jason. I was told to be wary of who I meet on this plane, and just a few moments ago, I saw one of the people I was a looking for and let's just say she was a lost cause" Jason strokes his beard like a wise wizard "I see." Frank continues his point "She killed a guy with an ax" Jason shakes his head at that remark "Women."

“Jason, this is serious” Frank says, returning to his main point “I understand, Frank. Hear me out. Back at the library I saved you once or twice from what I remember. Just now you saved me in return. You might be a rich boy and me a hobo but the way I see it we’re even and on the same page with wanting to get off this plane. I trust you, Frank. If you don’t trust me, well, I’ll get back in the maiden” Jason says and finishes his own point by giving a serious look to Frank. Frank, gives a slow nod “I trust you, Jason. Let’s get off this damn plane.”

CHAPTER 11:

TURBULENCE

“Say, Frank, you look pretty worse for wear, you know. Suit is an awful lot more dirty than when I last saw you. Got to say, you could rock the homeless look if you wanted” Jason jokes with Frank as the two of them exit the dungeon “Aw shut up, Jason” Frank playfully pushes his friend “If you took a shower you would probably smell like a million bucks!” Jason laughs “Oh yeah? So what was your excuse for smelling the way you did back in the cabin?”

Frank was feeling relieved that Jason was back. He was even feeling confident that they could save the day if they worked together which was a very big turn around with how he was feeling when he saw Ari and Atlas “I got a tip about a treasury. You think there might be a skull key there?” Jason

agreed "Seems like a good place to look if we can find it. Let's keep going as far back on the plane as we can and see what we dig up, partner."

The two men follow a stone set of stairs out into a new area that is the complete opposite of the dungeon. They go from a dungeon to what looks like a futuristic spaceship. However, this spaceship is dark and grim so it still matched the atmosphere of the dungeon. To the right of the men is a railing and below that a lower floor with a curved wall that sort of matched how the interior of a plane should be shaped. They hear a voice. A french accent "At last. We 'ave captuaird le wéasel."

Jason tugs at Frank's arm and suggests they cover at the bottom of the railings to see the commotion below. They do that and below and they see the mob of gremlins from the library. Below they see the gremlins and a few other people. Frank recognizes Captain Nesmer right away "So it wasn't a nightmare, he really is a pig-man" Frank whispers "Shh" Jason shhs Frank. Frank does not recognize the back of the man standing among the gremlins. They are wearing a fancy blue suit with a large powdered wig and puffy aristocratic tie. "Now we must discuss negotiashe-ons. Fair startairs. Weehl you join us now?" Frank sighed, and thought to himself "So that's the Frenchman Lucas was talking about. Wait a second. Lucas?"

The Frenchman moves and Frank sees Lucas on his knees, neck held by the sunglasses wearing pig-man "Like I told you freaks before, no! I don't even know you guys!" The Frenchman, who had a fancy cane, holds it up to Lucas' chin "I am called le Labuschagne. Think of me as le man who décide whethair you live air dié. Un more time. Weehl you join our ranks?" Lucas pauses and looks around like he's looking for one last chance to escape his fate. "Jason" Frank whispers "that's one of the passengers I came on board with. We can't just leave him down there" Jason puts his finger to his lips "Shh. We can't. There's just too many of them down there."

Lucas spots Frank and Jason looking down on him from above "Oh crap" Frank thinks "Jason..." "Shhh." A dramatic silence fills the room "He's going to rat us out, isn't he?" Frank thinks. Finally, the man called le Labuschagne lowers his cane and sighs "A pitay you 'ave chosén death. But zum deaths are quikair than othairs mon wry-lee Mexican friend. You came across Frank, 'avé you not?" Frank feels his heart pound once more "Crap, crap, crap, now he's just going to tell them to look up at us" Frank thinks, fearing what will happen if Nesmer and the gremlins get their hands on him next. Lucas smiles "Sorry, monsieur, but I haven't seen Frank since I was back in the cabin. I've no idea where he is or what he's up to. This reminds me of a campaign I saw on the news to put dog leashes on children at grocery stores.

The idea was if children were to ever go missing the leashes would lead to cartel hideouts...”

Labuschagne smacks Lucas with his cane “Silencé! I shall not be moked by ze likes of you” Lucas smiles “Hey, just because I don’t want to join your evil cult doesn’t mean I don’t have a sense of comradery” Labuschagne stomps down his cane “Hmph! Captain Nesmair. Pléase see to our guests landéng, weehl you? Be sure to use zat gental touch of yurs” Labuschagne bows down his prisoner “Adiós señor, Binesville.”

Frank grabs at Jason nervously “Jason...” Jason gives Frank a hard look “That’s Nesmer down there, Frank. If he’s down there that just means we won’t have to deal with him in the flight deck if we can find the skull key” Frank reluctantly agrees “Zulu’s not there either” Jason makes a fist of conviction “This is our best chance then. They’ll both be out looking for us and we’ll lock them out of their own flight deck.”

The pig-man Nesmer squeals like a pig. He turns Lucas to his side and places his plump thumbs up to the eyes Frank once thought were mad looking. Frank felt sorry for the coked up Mexican. Lucas felt Nesmer’s thumbs pop out his eyes. He let out a blood curdling scream as Nesmer thumbbed out his eyes. The pig-man removes his thumbs with eyeballs like olives on his thumbs. He wipes them off and takes out a boat knife before

taking off Lucas' scalp. Frank looks away as screams and squeals harmonize and the feet of gremlins begin to dance. Jason tugs Frank's shoulder and they begin to sneak away. Frank looks back and sees Nesmer swing open the door on the wall before tossing Lucas' corpse out of it "HE DIDN'T FLY SO GOOD" Nesmer squeals.

In the next room Frank leans on a futuristic pipe before vomiting from seeing a man get his eyeballs plucked "Adem..." Frank mumbles with vomit breath "What?" Jason asks "Adem. We have to find him. We can't let them be him back there" Jason agrees "The kid, right? Sure, Frank. Once we get that key. Come on."

They go down a hall and see a door that reads "End of the Line" on it. It opens for them and they enter the next room. The next room appears to be a void of darkness save for two rows of distant cherry trees glowing with a pink light "I don't like the look of this place" Frank says "No" Jason adds.

They tread carefully into the spooky infinite room. Eventually they get to the first of the cherry blossoms "Was wondering when you would show up, Jason" a dry voice says "Who said that?" Frank asks aloud. Jason grumbles "Ugh. Get ready for some turbulence" The two of them look to their side and spot a man. The man is very fashionable but not tacky like Labuschagne. He is dressed in all black, has black hair, and even black rimmed glasses. He leans

nonchalantly against the tree with a katana resting up to his shoulder. Jason takes a defensive stance “Waldun.”

Waldun, a Japanese man with a katana to grind, takes a sip from a can of RC cola “You brought a friend, Jason. That’s good. I did the same” Jason chuckles at Waldun “A friend? You’re still doing those?” A new man appears from the row of trees, clapping his hands. Giddily, he speaks to the trio “Quik now, everyone to their battle stations! Before all this bloodshed slathers. I bid hello and salutations! For the one named Card gathers” Frank sees the man approaching them has curly hair and a brown suit coat. He adjusts his large bowtie and gives a wicked smile to them “Who the hell is this guy?” Waldun steps away from his tree “We’re not with this United Airlines if that’s what you’re thinking” Frank, honestly, couldn’t tell.

“You got a new partner in crime, I see” Jason spits on the ground with disdain “Don’t be sore, Jason” Waldun steps out in front of Jason and Frank and is soon joined by the one named Card “Wait a second” Frank begins “that guy with the glasses, he’s the other passenger you came on board with, right? That’s the one?” Jason nods gravely “Yea, Waldun, who let a bunch of people get gobbled up by the devil head to save his own skin” Waldun grows a sly smile “Like I said, Jason. Don’t be sore about this. You landed on your feet just fine.”

Sensing the rising tension, Frank speaks up before all hell lets loose "If none of us are with this United Airlines cult then shouldn't we work together?" Card giggles at the suggestion "This one looks ready to cower! When he doesn't know about the power" Frank becomes confused "Power? What power?" Waldun answers Frank next "Look around you. Room seems empty, doesn't it? The plane has some pocket voids like this. It's how the rooms on the plane are made. A little creativity and you can will things into existence with your own mind. Card and I have it mostly figured out. So we got to thinking. Why land this plane and return to our mundane lives when we could simply take that power for ourselves?"

"So you're as bad as the cult" Jason says. Waldun grits his teeth "I knew you would never understand, Jason. That's why I teamed up with someone who did." Card performs a gentlemanly courtesy "Life is just so cruel. Let us dispense with all this talk. I say it is time for our duel. So you and me take a walk" Card says, gesturing his hand to the side, causing an elevator to burst from the dark ground. Frank gives an uncertain look to Jason "It's alright, Frank. He doesn't look that tough. Besides, I got a score to settle" Jason puts out his hand without breaking his angry stare at Waldun. From the void

another katana flies out toward Jason and he expertly grasps it, ready for battle.

“Looks may be deceiving” Card says as he walks smugly toward the elevator “when you don’t know the rape you’ll be receiving” Frank gulps and follows Card to the elevator. Waldun holds up his hand and wills a can of RC cola into existence. He takes a sip and lets out a devious burp “Shall we?” Jason takes out the liquor bottle from his coat and finishes it over before throwing it to the side where it shatters “Lets.”

Entering the elevator, Frank’s mind was in a state of disbelief “I can’t believe this. We can will objects into reality in this room? With what? Our imagination? Can’t I just give myself the skull key?” Frank tries to imagine the skull key but nothing happens “Maybe because I don’t know what it really looks like? Ugh, just when I think I have United Airlines figured out.”

Standing next to Card on the elevator, Frank looks on and sees Jason and Waldun standing still with katanas drawn. A pedal from the cherry blossoms slowly hovers to the ground. The moment it hits the ground Frank sees the katanas swing. Then the door closes.

CHAPTER 12: BAKAJIN

Angelic music plays as the luxurious elevator hummed down into the unknown. Awkwardly, Frank stands next to the man who just threatened to rape him moments ago “You, uh” Frank clears his throat “catch the Bears game last night?” Card does not even look Frank in the eyes when he says “Never cared for bears or how men be. Instead I’d rather have me a cute enbie” Frank bows his head, baffled by what the man, who he was now sure was a psychopath, meant.

The elevator door opens and reveals a room that looks like a theater but with a rectangular pit in the center. There are red curtains along the walls and in the pit there are panels that make it look like a game board “Is that where we’re doing our duel?” Frank asks. Card simply walks up to the first end of the pit “This is the place many have died. We fight with no swords or arrows that take aim. Now please hurry and walk to the other side. We play

Bakajin, a deadly game."

"WHAT" Frank runs up and examines the pit and sees it's actually an arena for the game Bakajin "Wait, so we're not having a cool samurai fight like the others? We're just playing Bajajin?" Bakajin. Frank remembers it fondly from his youth. It was a card game that involved monsters fighting each other with some other bonus cards that did other things. It was fun from what Frank remembered as a child but this? "This is just lame" Card scowls "The game is a thriller! It also packs a lot of dread. The winner's a killer. So don't lose your head."

"Alright, alright" Frank jogs over to the other side of the arena "I remember playing this game in elementary school. Of course, I also did a little boxing in high school, thought we might settle things more like that" Frank says, but Card ignores his complaint. "This void room is quite the tickle. Think what you need, it'll work like a charm. But realize with me you're in one hell of a pickle. Now hold up that arm" Card holds up his arm and a moment later a duel disk materials around his arm. A smug look burns on his face "But I don't have one of those" Frank says "Is your brain shaped like a knot? Just give it a thought!"

Frank imagines a duel disk like the one attached to Card's arm and soon one appears on his own arm "Holy smokes, all I did was think of one

being on my arm and now there is one!" Frank made a mental note to try and focus on some sexy ladies once Card was dealt with. Card holds up his jagged duel disk and shouts "Last player standing wins! The game of our lives now begins!" A flash of light causes a swarm of cards to spin in an orb over the center of the arena. Half the cards shuffle onto Card's disk and then Frank's. The game was on.

"Bakakin" Frank mutters "a game of monsters. A huge hit over in Japan. Dang, what else do I remember?" Frank draws his first cards and looks them over "There's three types of cards. Monsters. Buffs. Traps. Now if only I remembered the good cards" Card slams his first card down onto his disk "Get ready and do your worst! Your bones I'll break and eyes I'll blacken. I'll start this game and go first. By summoning my green eyes king falcon!" An anthropomorphic falcon with a kingly coat and crown descends from thin air and onto the battlefield. Frank had to admit, he felt excited to see a monster he once knew only as a card, appear before him in the flesh "Or I guess in the feathers, it would seem" Frank thinks.

Frank looks over the first five cards that he has drawn "Crap, tree weak buffs, a basic level 1 monster, and ugh... that *card*. Well, if I don't have any monsters on the field that just means Card can attack me directly and lower my health points to zero. Each player starts with 100% but from what

I remember King Falcon is a level 3 monster which means it can do a lot of damage” Frank plays his first two cards “Alright, Card. I’ll summon my first monster, Pineapple Pirate” Frank concentrates on the card and Pineapple Pirate, a pineapple monster who was dressed like a pirate, appears on the battlefield, spouting a signature “ARG!” Frank then lays out his second card “I’ll also use the buff card Unwanted Sequel! Its buff allows any monster on the field to return from the graveyard with half of its stats if defeated.”

Card gives a devious smile “This will be hard for you to grapple. My King Falcon shall slice up your pirate Pineapple!” King Falcon flies over to Pineapple Pirate, swats him down, and crushes him with his talons. Frank feels a very real pain and the number 100% appears over his head and drops down to 90% “Yes, I can see the fear in your eyes. Before my turn ends I’ve one more surprise” Card lays a card on the field but does not summon it for battle. His turn over, the next turn begins with a weakened Pineapple Pirate being summoned by Frank’s Unwanted Sequel buff. Frank then desperately draws one more card, hoping to find something useful.

Frank holds back his smile, seeing the new card in his hand “Alright, this is a card strong enough to take down King Falcon” Frank wastes no time making his move “I sacrifice my level 1 Pineapple Pirate in order to summon my level 4 monster Kango the Kangaroo Boxer! A fitting card considering my

boxing history, don't you think, Card?" Kango appears on the battlefield and begins swinging at the air "Since Kango is stronger than King Falcon I'll start by boxing him into the graveyard" Card laughs at the idea as Kango springs into action "Nice try but you should have stayed on your guard! With Kango attacking I'll summon my trap card!"

A nervous look cracks across Frank's face "A trap card?" The card on the other side of the field lifts up and reveals... "Oh no" Frank cries "A trap!" Frank sees the trap he met on Paradise Beach. The trap combs his hand through his hair seductively and wiggles his hip. Kango lowers his sunglasses as hearts pop over his head. He rushes over to kiss the trap with the butterfly tattoo but is stabbed in the back by the trap. The two despawn and Frank's health points from 90% to 70%. Card laughs like a hyena on meth "The butterfly makes such a sweet little pet. Too bad for you, Falcon hasn't made his move yet!" Frank had cringed at the sight of the trap and the memory it brought back on the beach. However, Falcon's attack directly on his own health points made him shudder with pain. His life points dropped from 70% to 50% and Frank realized he truly was in a pickle.

"Sorry to burst your bubble. Father always said to separate the wheat from the chaff. That's why you're in big trouble. Since already your life points are down to half!" Frank grits his teeth dramatically "Stop with the rhymes

already, it's getting annoying!" Frank closes his eyes in deep contemplation "This isn't good. He's pounding me in the ass just like he said he would. If I don't get my hands on a decent enough monster then his King Falcon is going to make me worm food!" Frank takes out another card and takes a breath of relief "Finally, a break" he plays the card with a reassured grin "I summon my level 2 magic monster Goth Cheerleader!" A cheerleader who was goth appears on the battlefield. She rolls her eyes and gags for having bothered showing up "Next I'll lay two cards down on the field while Goth Cheerleader attacks King Falcon!"

Card snickers "Is this some sort of bluff? Level 2 against my 3, it's not enough!" Frank smiles back "It's true Goth Cheerleader isn't strong enough to defeat King Falcon. But as a magic monster her ability isn't meant to defeat monsters but rather weaken their stats. This includes a minor damage penalty per attack" Goth Cheerleader then performs an unenthusiastic cheer as if she didn't really want to be here. Watching the lame chant, King Falcon's morale becomes reduced. Card feigns a smile as his health drops from 100% to 90% "Your Goth Cheerleader is a terrible speaker. Looks like I'll have to give another card a try. King Falcon is much more weaker. I'll sacrifice him for level 5 Wenyu the Flaming Samurai!"

A samurai burning on fire appears on Card's side of the arena "This monster can cut down any with one whirl. Now, Wenyu, cut down his girl!" Wenyu dashes forward like a meteoroid on steroids. Frank interjects before the samurai cuts down the cheerleader "Not so fast, Card. I activate my trap card Smoke Screen" Frank watches Card nervously step back as Frank's card reveals itself. Smoke Screen transforms into a cigarette which Goth Cheerleader takes a huff of. She then blows a cloud of smoke that envelopes the arena "Smoke Screen renders all enemies on the field blind. This causes them to turn around and..." Wenyu slices down on Card, dropping his health points down from 90% to 50%. Card lets out a cry of real pain while Frank gloats "Looks like things are beginning to even out now, huh?"

Card begins to shake with a mad rage but forces a smile "Are you kidding? I've got just the trick. This card will undo your smoke's bidding. After that you can go and suck a dick!" Card smacks down a card so hard onto his disk it sends a few others flying "The time for mercy has passed! I summon Heavy Rain Forecast!" A dark cloud appears over the arena and rain falls, removing Frank's Smoke Screen "My turn then" Frank says "Tell me, Card. Did you notice you fell right into my trap?" Card only glares and Frank explains "Forecast might have removed the Smoke Screen's effect but while active it does two things. Two things that have cost you this game! Notice

Wenyu yet?"

Looking over to Wenyu the Flaming Samurai, the rain had made it so he was no longer flaming "What!?" Card shouts "Out of rhymes are we?" Frank boasts "Forecast is a trick card. It'll nullify certain cards with elemental properties like Wenyu. This renders his power down to level 4. But I think we can do even better numbers. Goth Cheerleader, attack Wenyu!" Goth Cheerleader does another half-assed cheer and Wenyu bows his head in cringing agony while Card's health drops to 40% "We're not done yet, Card. If you look over you'll see I have two cards left on the field already. The first card is Gravedigger. It allows me to sacrifice one of my active monsters to bring back one from the graveyard. Now that Goth Cheerleader has finished her performance I'll sacrifice her and bring back Kango the Kangaroo Boxer!"

Kango spawns in the place of Goth Cheerleader as Card looks panicked "Figured it out yet, Card? Before Wenyu might have been an even match for Kango but thanks to Goth Cheerleader he's been reduced to level 3. Which makes him just one level weaker than Kango. Kango?" Kango jumps up and licks his lips. He springs forwards and punches Wenyu to smithereens. Card cries out as Frank watches his health deplete from 40% to 10%.

Card grunts as he grabs his chest “You tricky bastard. You’re in for it now. I’ve got this game mastered. This next card will show you how” Frank puts up his finger, telling Card to wait “Not just yet, Card. My turn isn’t over yet” Card’s eyes bulge from his head, hearing there is still more in store for him “To be honest with you, Card, I always hated this card as a kid. I never found a good use for it so it would waste space. Well, not today. I activate my last remaining card, Diddle Dandelion!” The card stands up and vines and roots begin to grow out from it “Normally it’s a fodder card but thanks to your Heavy Rain Forecast it’s actually able to spread out and grow! This allows it to perform its true purpose” Diddle Dandelion’s vines latch onto Card’s arms and hold them apart. Frank explains further “Diddle Dandelion forbids my opponent from adding any cards for the next round. Which means, what do you know, it’s my turn again.”

Card growls furiously as the vines hold him in place “You think this is some clever stunt? You’ll pay for this you foul little...” Kango hops high into the high and Frank yells out “Looks like we still get to box after all. Kango!

Attack Card directly!" Kango launches his gloved kangaroo fist epically at Card as he screams, unable to block the formidable attack. Card's health drops to 0%. The monsters on the floor fade away, and Frank smiles victoriously.

"Bakajin" Frank declares, ready to shake Card's hand. He looks over to Card who appears stunned that he lost "I win, Card, so I guess that means I get to go..." Card's head explodes in a visage of gore and blood. Frank even spots an eyeball sling off the ceiling "Oh fuck! What the fuck, what..." Frank recoils from Card's sudden death. Card's body falls limp over the arena, his bowtie marking the new end of his body "I didn't... I didn't know his head would just do that! Was that what was at stake? What the hell!"

Frank goes to inspect Card's headless body "Am I a killer now? Or was I going to have the missing head if I lost?" The elevator door opens and Frank wastes no time getting away from the maniac he had just watched die before his eyes "Oh God" Frank moans "He might have lost his head but I think I'm losing my mind."

CHAPTER 13:

DEPARTURES

Frank exits the elevator back to the void room with the blossom trees "Jason? Hey, where are you? Is the fight over?" Frank turns his head and sees Waldun standing with a bloody katana "Oh flip, if Waldun's the one left then that means..." Waldun suddenly falls face forward. Dead. A cough is heard from the other end of the trees. Frank sees Jason limping away with a blood trail behind him "Jason!"

He runs over to Jason and turns him over. Frank holds his friend in his arms as he slouches to the ground. There are slash marks all across Jason's body and blood drips down his face and mixes into his beard "Jason..." Frank says, sounding sad "Heh... knew you could take of the other one. Held up my end of the bargain. We kicked their asses, huh?" Jason says "Sorry, Frank,

looks like I took more of a whopping than I intended."

Frank wipes a tear from his eye "I'm sorry I couldn't have helped you" Jason sighs "Don't be such a pussy. People die in sword fights like clockwork. Speaking of. Here..." Jason holds up his katana and Frank accepts it "You were alright" Jason coughs "for a rich boy. Now go, Frank. Find the kid. The key..." Jason points to the side where a gold door stands in the void "End this... nightmare..."

A single tear falls from Frank's eye before he gathers his nerves "You were a good man, Jason. This won't be for nothing" he gently lowers his departed friend to the ground, sheaths his katana through his pant loop, and heads for the golden door. With a heavy sigh, Frank enters the next room of the plane.

"Wow... it's like Russia's palace" Frank looks around in awe as he sees what looks like an art museum but packed with extra luxurious looking items. He sees giant works of art along with sculptures and piles of gold behind red velvet ribbons "So this must be the treasury. I made it. The walls themselves look like they're made of gold too. Did they put this all together with their minds?" Stuck in a state of awe, Frank pushes on around the corner of the gallery. He sees a giant painting of a man who looks like a dictator from

the middle east. Exotic and cruel looking. Under the painting it simply reads "MacNaughton."

Around the next corner Frank sees three figures at the end of the treasury. One is a gremlin dressed like a fancy butler. The other two he recognizes. To Frank's horror, he sees the two humans are Labuschagne and Zulu. He considers ducking for cover but the two madmen see him instantly.

"Thought he might turn up sooner or later" Zulu grumbles. Frank gasps as he notices hung around Zulu's neck, hanging out with his dog tags, is the skull key. Zulu smiles and holds up the key "I see you looking. Well, if you want it, you'll have to take it from me. Too bad I'm going to wring your neck now" Labuschagne stomps down his cane "You weehl do non such theng. Tak yur leave, Zulu. You 'ad yur chance. I shall deahl wiv Frank myself" Zulu looks back to Labuschagne who is busy stroking his thin mustache "Have it your way. Just be quick about it. The boss is waiting" Zulu leaves through the doors behind him.

"You gave us a good chase but now you must face yur déath, Frank. I suggest you facé eet wiv dignitay. Step fairward. We shall 'avé a duél, you ét I. Peestuls. Un shot. I must warn you though. I nevair lose" Labuschagne hands his cane to the butler gremlin. Frank steps forward with courage coursing through his veins "Oh, I accept your challenge, Labuschagne. But

I must warn you. Once I win I'm putting a stop to your plane once and for all" Labuschagne snickers as he takes up his antique pistol from the gremlin "Hmph. Bravado talking. Stand at le end of le carpet and we shall fight like men" Labuschagne says.

Frank accepts his antique pistol from the gremlin and steps up to the long carpet where Labuschagne stands waiting at the other end "Un le count of thr..." Frank fires his pistol into Labuschagne's chest and immediately he covers his mouth as if he had dropped one of the expensive pieces of art around him "Shit! I'm sorry, were we firing on the count of three? I swear, I didn't know, I thought you meant as soon as we were in position" Smoke floats up from both Frank's pistol as well as the bloody hole in Labuschagne's chest "Imbecil..." Labuschagne falls over dead.

The butler gremlin walks by Frank and he says to the gremlin "I'm serious, I wasn't trying to be a dick, I swear I didn't know" the gremlin pays him no mind and walks away. Frank goes to inspect Labuschagne and sees he is truly dead "Well this is embarrassing. I'll just leave the firing too soon part out of the story going forward. Assuming..." Frank looks to the door and knows he has to face Zulu next "What am I thinking? Of course I'll survive this. I just need to get the key. But first I better take Labuschagne's pistol in

case I need it" Frank tosses the pistol he used and puts Labuschagne's pistol in his coat. He grips his katana and enters the next room.

"Christ, I'm back here" Frank thinks as he finds himself back in the swamp library. This time, however, he's starting on an upper floor as he can see the tops of bookshelves ahead. Carefully, Frank creeps forward out of the first room until, from an even higher floor, he hears Zulu "So Labuschagne finally bit off more than he could chew" Frank looks up and sees Zulu on one of the higher floors of the library. Frank eyes the skull key on Zulu as Zulu bends down to reach for something "Hmph. Looks like I get a big promotion and you..." Zulu holds up a rocket launcher "you're in big trouble."

"Holy shit" Frank shouts as he runs over the ledge of the floor he is on. He falls down into the flooded bookshelf lane below. He hears the explosion above before splashing down into the water. When Frank surfaces again he sees there are bodies floating in the water and he remembers what he heard about the group of people who were with Jason and Waldun "Wait a sec, what's that over the bodies?" Frank sees a series of shark fins poke up from the water and are swimming toward him "Oh God! I am never flying United Airlines again!"

Frank sashes his way through the water and finds a set of stairs peeking up from the swamp water. Frank climbs the first few steps, thinking

he's safe. However, the fins reach the stairs and little shark creatures start walking out of the water on their back legs "Shit" Frank cries as he takes his katana and cuts down the first shark. He tries to slice the next but it manages to bite his arm "Aah!" Frank kicks the shark off and escapes up the stairs while his arm begins to leak blood from the shark bite.

Up the stairs Frank eventually cuts through the bookshelf maze until he finds an opening enclosed by the giant book shelves. It looks like a sitting area that was thrown apart with couches and chairs on their sides. Frank starts to walk through the opening when he sees Zulu to the side, loading a submachine gun "This is where the magic first began, Frank. Where we realized the mind's unlimited potential to create" Frank orbits Zulu from afar and says "The only thing you and your friends have created is a nightmare" said Frank. Zulu chuckles "Heh, enough talk" Zulu holds the small machine gun with one hand and opens fire on Frank. Frank hides behind a couch and waits for Zulu to reload. The bullets, from Zulu's gun, pierce many of the books in front of Frank, causing the books to let out little high pitch screams.

The shooting stops and Frank rushes off for another passage among the bookshelves. Frank runs through the book corridors with Zulu occasionally running along the adjacent lanes and firing through the books at him. At the end of the hall of books Frank sees a familiar sight "Hey! That's

the spot I saw those gremlins worshiping that spooky cult leader in the red robe. There's no one there now" Frank sees no other option and decides to run across the opening and climb the stairs to the floor where he saw the cult leader. Just as Frank reaches the top of the stairs, a bullet passes through his leg "My leg!"

Zulu continues to fire on Frank from the main library but Frank manages to limp to the next floor for cover. He sees another open sitting area but this time there is a wall with a door not too far from the spot. There is also large debris that seems to have fallen from the ceiling. Frank takes cover just in time as Zulu shows up firing more rounds at him "Shit, he got me in the leg. I don't think I can run so much anymore. It hurts really bad too. Like, well, like getting shot in the leg" Frank thinks but then he hears the click of Zulu's gun.

"You can come out, Frank" Zulu says "I'll make this fair for you" Zulu says, tossing away his gun. Frank peeks his head out and sees Zulu taking out his combat knife "This is it" Frank thinks "I might have a bad leg and shark bite but if it's a katana against a knife, and if I give it my all, I'm sure I can win this" perilously, Frank and Zulu circle one another. Frank clutches his katana nervously while Zulu confidently spins around his combat knife in his hand. They circle for a time. Each waiting for the moment to strike. Each slowly

getting closer to the other until finally, Zulu breaks from his pace, suddenly striking his knife at Frank. Frank, swats at the strike with his katana. There's a clash between their blades. Then the circling resumes.

Their orbit of one another stops after some time. Zulu isn't far from Frank. Frank knows he has to get closer to get the key. At once, they both strike at the other. However, all the suspense is gone as Frank feels the cut Zulu slices into his side "Aaahh..." Frank groans, holding his wound "That bastard... he got the first hit here" Frank thinks of all the people United Airlines has thus far claimed "Jason. Adem. I've gotta win this. Can't let one cut stop me. I just need to get the last cut in."

Zulu licks Frank's blood off of his knife "Mm. Just like mama put on our PB&Js" Frank growls at Zulu "Fucking psycho" They clash again and again Zulu slices across Frank's body. Zulu laughs as Frank holds his latest wound. Tears well up in Frank's eyes as Zulu mocks him "I gotta win this... I gotta stop them no matter what" Frank thinks before charging at Zulu. With relative ease, Zulu grabs Frank, hurls him away and onto the ground and the katana flies into the broken debris around them "End of the line" Zulu says.

On his back, Frank looks up to the ceiling, with the taste of his own blood in his mouth "Is this how I really die? I don't even have the strength to hold the pistol in my jacket" Frank's vision steadies and he looks to the holes

in the ceiling where light pours in “Are we really on a plane? Were we ever on a plane? Outside the ceiling... is that like the void from the room with the cherry blossoms? Is it just seeping in with the light?” Rather than his life flashing before his eyes, Frank’s mind was abuzz with sudden quick thinking “Zulu was talking about the mind’s potential and all that magic stuff back with Card and Waldun. Can I do magic... just a little... here?”

Frank sits up and sees Zulu, spinning his knife, approaching him. Behind Zulu, Frank spots his katana sticking out of the debris “Can I do what Jason did?” With nothing left to lose, Frank weakly puts up his bloody arm. Zulu begins to snicker as Frank tries all his might to imagine the sword returning to his hand. But then... the death blow.

The blade cuts through flesh and when Frank opens his eyes again he

sees his own hand... holding the katana. Frank looks up. A red line fades onto Zulu's body. Zulu's hand falls severed from his wrist and his upper body falls back from his timbering legs. Frank had won. Using the katana for support, Frank staggers back up to his feet to see his mangled adversary bleeding on the ground. For a moment, Frank has to check to make sure he is really holding the katana "It worked..." he looks back to Zulu's cut in half body and goes to claim the skull key.

Bending down to rip the key from Zulu's body, Frank picks up the key, but suddenly Zulu's eyes move onto Frank "See you in hell, Frank" Zulu says, holding up a strange looking ring. Frank looks down and sees the grenade rendered unpinned on Zulu's side. Frank gasps and breaks the key off Zulu. Frank jumps for the door on the wall and the grenade explodes.

CHAPTER 14: END OF THE LINE

Struggling to get back on his feet once again, Frank stands and sees where he is “I’m back in the cabin?” He was at the very back of the cabin. Back where the nightmare began. There was a feeling of trepidation in Frank as he studied the eerily empty cabin. At the end of the cabin was the blast shield “I made it...”

Slowly, Frank drags his body across the cabin, feeling like an action hero who just beat the bad guy “Now all I gotta do is land this thing” Frank reaches the blast shield and puts the key in the tumbler. The blast shield sinks into the floor and a normal looking door to the flight deck enters clear view “After surviving everything I’ve just been through I should have no issue landing a plane.”

The flight deck wasn't exactly what Frank was expecting. It did look like a flight deck, he had to admit. But it also looked way bigger than when he barged in and saw Nesmer and Zulu "It almost looks like a set piece from that space show I watched when I was a kid. It's longer than a flight deck should be and there's way more science fiction looking control panels. Plus I don't remember there being those chairs before the end of the flight deck. It almost looks like a throne" To Frank's side he sees windows on the sides of the flight deck rather than just the front. The windows showed a black void like the room with the cherry blossoms "We're not even on Earth anymore, are we?"

"No, sugar. Far from it" a voice hums from the throne "W-Whose there?" Frank demands. The throne slowly turns around and Frank sees a familiar fat black woman. Shocked, Frank says "DeShawna!" The black lady he met at the airport reaches to the back of her neck "Almost, sugar" she unzips a zipper running down her back and Frank sees the cult leader in the red robe stepping out of the fat suit. Only now he sees their face "You're a reptilian?" The cult leader had rotten looking green skin with glowing yellow eyes "Something like that. My days of being a human are long behind me, that's for sure. Everyone come on out. I'd say we owe an explanation to Frank."

From the side appear Nesmer and Woolston. From behind Ari appears and locks the door to the cabin. She holds her ax close to her body and waves hello to Frank. When Frank looks back, he sees Nesmer and Woolston on either side of the cult leader who it turns out he had already met in disguise at Terminal 13 “Well, you’ve got my attention. You have some speech rehearsed?” The cult leader smiles his yellow teeth at Frank “More like a ritual I want you to see. I said *everyone* come out.”

Frank looks over to his other side and sees the last person exit from the corner room. Frank’s eyes widen with shock as he sees “Adem?” Adem casually strolls up to the platform the others are on and looks down on Frank “Hi, Frank” Frank can hardly believe what he is seeing. The boy he had been looking for. The one he was trying to save. He was with them? “What are you doing, Adem?”

“He has chosen to become one of the few” the cult leader says. The goth boy gives an evil smile toward Frank “Remember when we first met? I had asked to use your phone. At the time I was so nervous about all of this. I had wanted to call the master and make sure for certain I was on the correct flight. That’s how desperate I was to know I was on the path” Adem says. Frank holds up his katana, both terrified and betrayed “Path? What path?” The cult leader narrows his eyes “The only path that matters. The path of

power.”

“I was invited to United Airlines, Frank. Unlike you I knew what I was getting into. They saw my potential and invited me to join their ranks. Now I am ready to be baptized” The cult leader holds up his right hand and green smoke begins to form into it. In his hand materializes a green chalice. Adem kneels down before the cult leader and is offered the chalice “Drink, child. Drink the milk of our God” Adem accepts and drinks from the chalice. A moment later he begins to cough and grab at his chest. Frank waters a hunch grow into his back and his arms painfully elongate. Adem’s skin turns to a shade of green and he stands up with a deformed face complete with drooling fangs “Yes, ha-ha! I feel the power coursing through me!”

“This is sick” Frank shouts, not caring if he was spoiling the moment for Adem “who are you people? What the fuck is going on?” The cult leader rises from his throne and Adem crawls back beside him “We are the Cult of the Unreal. I am the master, Miles MacNaughton. Or so I once was. I am now the avatar of the deity Ambrose whose soul has bonded to my own. Where Miles begins and Ambrose ends I no longer know. It matters not. No, all that matters is our plan. I must say, Frank. It feels strange having to explain this all to you. After all, in another reality, you already know all this.”

Frank felt his head spinning from all this information being piled onto him. Fittingly, in a strange way, he felt a sense of unreality creeping over him “Unreal? Another reality?” Frank asks. MacNaughton continues “I will explain our order first. We began as a literary group, outcasted from the mainstream. Thinkers and creatives. A humble origin, really. But there was always the thirst for power and always the will to achieve it no matter what. We ascended from mediocrity when our studies of the occult were realized and we made communion with the deity Ambrose. A powerful network grew. Fortune and power. World domination went from the subject of our fantastical writings to practical discussions.

“But this was all in another reality. We are voyagers here. From across the void. In our reality, we were defeated by none other than you, Frank. That’s right. In another reality you are a world famous author with untold knowledge of the arcane. When we eventually went to war with you for supremacy, I realize now, we never stood a chance.”

Frank couldn’t believe it “Me? A world famous author? No way. I mean, I’ve thought about writing once or twice before but nothing serious. I did have an idea about a story, with a crocodile” Frank says. MacNaughton hisses “It all started with that fucking crocodile. When you defeated us in that reality I knew we could never best you. But that was that reality and I

began to ponder about unreality. We traveled through the void to a reality where you did not have such an edge over us. This is where United Airlines began

“We brought with us our amassed fortunes and secrets. This time we thought world domination could be achieved through more subtle means. We would create a new world order via our writing. Master the industry and spread it over the globe. We took many steps to achieve this. Particularly in the airline industry. While we overwhelmed the literary scene with subpar books to elevate our own works, we’ve also more recently begun to offer our books as entertainment on flights instead of movies. Ah, but there are so many secrets when it comes to planes, Frank. For instance, did you know that flying doesn’t actually exist?”

“What are you talking about?” Frank asks, feeling his mind boggle “we’re on a plane right now? I’ve flown before and looked out the window. I see planes in the sky every day!” MacNaughton laughs “That’s what you think. This is a conspiracy we discovered on our own before eventually moving in on. Tell me, Frank. How do you *really* know that when you get on a plane it actually takes off and flies from one part of the world to another? The truth is planes don’t actually take off at airports. It’s all teleportation magic.

Well, teleportation science too, but we use magic at United Airlines. Couldn't tell you how Malaysian does it.

"When people get on planes, Frank, they teleport instantly to where they need to be. The wait time, the turbulence, it's all a show to foster the illusion. Your window you're looking out of? Basic television screens. The airline industry brings in billions of dollars per annum. *Billions*, Frank. If the secret was out then the airline companies would be destroyed and governments would have a hell of time keeping track of where everyone was popping to. The whole thing would be a mess. It's a system we intend to maintain when we eventually take over the world. Oh and the world, Frank. Bet you didn't know the Earth was flat too. Can't exactly fly around that, can you?"

Frank was beginning to feel more anger than anything now "The world is flat? Oh come on, now you're just fucking with me. What other crazy theories are real?" Frank asks "Are you sure you want to know, Frank? We hoard many secrets in our order. You don't seem like your mind can handle much more" MacNaughton says. Frank waves his katana "Just tell me! I want to know what else is going on" Frank says. "Alright, fine. Gorillas don't exist either. It's all just guys in suits" MacNaughton says "What? Gorillas don't exist? That's fucking retarded" Frank says "I don't know what the fuck you

want me to tell you, Frank. They're not real. Also sex isn't real either."

For a moment, Frank thinks it over "Sex isn't real?" MacNaughton nods "Correct. All men go on about all the broads they've had sex with but it's all for show. All men are virgins but most claim they aren't to keep up with the illusion. You don't have to think hard about it. If all of your buddies are talking about how they're getting laid you're going to lie that you are too. Meanwhile they're just doing the same. Appearances and all that. It's the world's grandest and most thinly veiled conspiracy. Of course there's always a few idiots that don't catch on to the fact sex is fake and they take it on women. What, Frank? Are you going to tell me about all the ladies you've slept with?"

Frank awkwardly looks over his shoulder and back to Ari. He lets out a sigh. It was true. Frank had never seen a woman's vagina. He was personally amazed that everyone obliviously kept up the conspiracy and suddenly everything MacNaughton was saying seemed true "But wait, where do babies come from?" Frank asked "Storks" MacNaughton answered. Frank gave a nod "Fair enough."

"We've gotten off track, Frank. It was fun to talk with you again after so long, even if you're not the same Frank I knew. I suppose that gets us back to our present plans. I'll wrap this up quickly. To put it bluntly, United

Airlines is a front for the Cult of the Unreal. Coming to this reality we realized we could pick off or recruit all the old players from our home reality. Our first target was a magazine mogul named Herod. You wouldn't know him now but in our reality he becomes the CEO of a multi-trillion dollar news network. By the 2070s he'll have used his influence to hand select three of the United States presidents. Instead of competing with that we offered him to join our ranks in this reality before the ball got rolling. A pity he refused. We shrunk him down and grinded him to dust. There's a little Herod in all the coke that gets sniffed on this plane.

“Do you understand what I'm getting at, Frank? We are a force not to be reckoned with. We offer minds with the potential to create and bend reality to join us. Adem has graciously become our latest recruit. As for those who do not wish to seek our enlightenment, well, Nesmer can tell you about the drop-outs. Sad to say, Frank, we didn't really bother consider asking you to join us. The plan was always to dispose of you once our operations were in full gear. But now I wonder what we could do with... an *unreal* Frank. Perhaps we could return home on equal footing with you there. That is if you were willing to drink the milk of our god. If not, well, we do hope you enjoyed flying with us.”

Frank remains quiet for a moment. He was faced with the heaviest

question of his life. A life that seemed to be over to him “I can't say I fully understand everything. The offer is tempting” Frank says. He looks over and sees what the drooling Adem has become “but green skin isn't really my thing” MacNaughton shrugs “A pity. Not that I have an issue with going back to plan A” Frank holds up a finger, asking for a moment of time “About that. Like I said, I don't really get how everything works with this magic and void business. But I do have a plan C in mind.”

Dropping his katana, Frank reaches into his coat and pulls out the antique pistol he got from Labuschagne. The Cult of the Unreal takes a nervous stance as Frank holds up the gun “I was really trying to save you, Adem” Frank says, giving a sorry look to the monstrous Adem “I thought if I couldn't save you Ari or Jason then maybe I could at least get you out of here. I see I was wrong. I also don't see how I could ever go back to having a normal life after all this. I mean, go back to city council? It sounds boring now” Frank says as he waves around his gun.

MacNaughton gives Frank a suspicious look “What are you planning to do with that gun, Frank?” Frank smiles “Well, I could take out the big bad guy with me since I feel like I'm already going down” Frank says, aiming the gun at MacNaughton, putting Nesmer and Woolston on alert “Or maybe I've been driven mad by all of this and like a good character in a Lovecraft story

I blow my brains out” Frank says, putting the gun to his head “That’s plan C and D right there. But I might have a plan E up my sleeve” Frank says with a playful grin.

If you the reader want the dashing Frank to kill MacNaughton then read the Plan C ending. If you want Frank to kill himself read the Plan D ending. Or if you want the heroic Frank to pull an ace out of his sleeve read the mysterious Plan E ending!

PLAN C

Frank shrugs "Ah, fuck it, I like the ending where I shoot you in the head" Frank says as he points his gun at MacNaughton "No wait, years of planning, you can't..." Frank fires his single shot through the front of MacNaughton's skull and out the back "Geaghghh!" MacNaughton hisses as his body is thrown over his throne.

A second after Frank fires his gun he feels the back of Ari's ax on his head. He bolts forward, feeling the terrible pain in his head. Woolston throws his boot into Frank's face, breaking his nose. Frank just smiles. Adem leaps across the room, using his new talons to claw open Frank's chest. Again, Frank just smiles. On his knees, dying, a bloody mess, Frank looks up to the pig-man Nesmer. Two piggy hands are fitted around Frank's head. Blood leaks down from Frank's mouth and he rests his tired eyes "Your book sucks

by the way.”

Nesmer squeals with rage as he twists Frank’s head off. Feeling the sensation of being thrown, Frank’s decapitated head opens its eyes. Time appears to have slowed down. From a side angle, Frank sees the chaos of the flight deck from toward the ceiling. He sees MacNaughton, dead. He sees Adem howling in the corner. Ari is preparing to swing her ax again on Frank’s headless body. Nesmer seems to be looking right at Frank. Meanwhile Frank’s blood is scattered everywhere. A snowglobe of blood, bits of it raining down onto Woolston’s hair.

Post-life enlightenment fills Frank’s decapitated head in the last few slowed down seconds of his life. He recalls the void and all its magic powers and thinks “Fuck it. Laser vision” His eyes glow red and, with a glaze of red coloring, the last thing Frank sees the twin lasers launched from his own eyes into the surprised Nesmer’s face. Nesmer’s head exploded. Frank feels good for taking down at least two of the Unreal with him. His head collides into the control panel and is enveloped by fire “What a life” Frank thinks “I hope I reincarnate as a dolphin. Or if there’s an afterlife I hope there’s anime there” This was Frank’s last thought as his brain splatters across the floor.

PLAN D

"I'm not giving you freaks the pleasure. I'm going out on my own

terms" Frank pulls back the hammer on the pistol "Adem" Frank says, giving one last sad look at him "I hope you live forever" Frank then speaks to everyone "Gentlemen, I have solved philosophy" Frank pulls the trigger.

Frank's brains splatter against the windows of the flight deck and his body hits the ground. MacNaughton steps down and looks over Frank's corpse. For a moment, it looks as if MacNaughton is actually sad to see his adversary dead. MacNaughton then looks over his minions and says "I forgot to ask him if he was on the spectrum."

PLAN E

Frank aims his pistol away from his head and toward the window of the flight deck “How about this plan?” Frank asks “What do you think you’re doing?” MacNaughton cries “Like I told you, guys. I don’t know for certain. But I’ve got a gambit I’m willing to try. See, for a while, I thought I was turning into a werewolf whenever I looked out of the window and saw the moon. Why not? Everything else seems to be on the table. But now I think that was just my body reacting... *connecting* to this void out there. It’s almost like it’s... *calling*.”

He pulls back the hammer of the pistol. MacNaughton hisses “Listen to me very carefully, Frank. I don’t know what you’re thinking but it won’t work” MacNaughton says. Frank gives a smile, accepting his resignation to fate “This is what I was getting to before. I thought there were others I could save but now that it’s just me... I’ll take my chances.”

"Frank" MacNaughton hisses as all the members of the cult stand on alert. Frank smiles from ear to ear and gives MacNaughton a look more mad than any of them "Flight's canceled" Frank fires his one shot at the window of the flight deck. The window shatters and everyone inside the room is sucked by a great vortex out of the cursed plane and into the void. Frank feels the heavy force whip him out into the open. After that he feels as light as a feather.

Looking down, Frank sees the others sinking into the space around them. He sees the plane he boarded. Distorted and changing shape and certain spots. He sees Woolston and Ari descend out of view into the bottomless depths of the void. Nesmer looks like a flying pig trying to swim through space, back to the plane. For a moment MacNaughton tries to claw at Frank but gravity, or whatever gravity exists now, spits him suddenly upward, out of existence. Adem, meanwhile, floats lifeless without direction in the opposite direction of everyone else.

"I did it" Frank thinks as he holds his breath "it's like we're in space now. Space without stars. Space without anything. I've killed myself, I guess. Oh well, don't think I was living either way. At least they're all going down with me. At least I've saved the world. That's got to be worth dying for" Frank looks away from the horror of the sinking United Airlines and takes in the

expanse of the infinite unknown “This is the void, huh? The space between dimensions? To think I was trying to think of what I wanted for breakfast this morning and now...” Now Frank was looking up to the glow of the full moon.

“Is that the moon? What’s the moon doing here? Wait, isn’t that the moon I’ve been seeing from the window of the cabin? I thought they said the windows were all screens. What’s going on?” Frank feels his body tremble, his nerves tighten, his heart race “This painful feeling again. My body hurts from just looking at it. Am I turning into a werewolf after all? Or is this something else?”

Frank senses the moon begins to rotate. It does so and a giant pupil reveals itself on the surface of the moon “Hang on. It’s not the moon at all. It’s an eyeball!” The eye studies Frank as Frank studies the eye “Who the hell’s eyeball is it? Who’s watching me right now? I can feel them. They’ve been watching me since I got to the airport I feel like. They’ve seen everything I’ve just been through. So who... who are *you*?”

The eye and Frank float apart and clouds swarm around the eye. Frank’s vision fades into the nothingness of the void. Frank accepts his fate and floats through the void in peace.

CHAPTER 15:

HORROR'S CALL

Frank awakes with a sudden rush of adrenaline "Wow, what a dream. No, that was more of a dream. That was like an experience. I-I... damn, it's getting away. I can't remember it. I feel like I can remember if I try, hmm... ah, damn it, nope" Frank moves his legs off of his bed. He looks out the window of his bedroom and sees a bright full moon "Moon's really bright tonight. Bet that's what woke me up. Funny, I feel like I was dreaming of the moon. I can't remember the details but the whole experience feels like it's sticking with me. Strange."

Frank looks over to his alarm clock on his dresser "3 in the morning. Still too early. I should go back to bed" Frank looks at his comfy pillow where his head left a soft imprint "Or maybe not" he stands up and looks himself

over in the mirror. He sees his crocodile pajamas and suddenly he feels as if he is seeing them for the first time “I feel kind of inspired right now. Damn, I don’t recall my dream but my brain is buzzing with all sorts of ideas right now. Ah screw it” Frank says aloud, moving to his desk where his computer is.

“I don’t know what’s gotten into me. There’s all this energy in me all of a sudden” Frank takes his seat and turns on the computer. He rubs his chin in thought “Am I like about to remember a past life or something? Man, I really wish we had machines that recorded our dreams already. That’d be nice and not a half bad idea either” Frank looks at his computer and smiles “Well, I’ve no idea what I’m doing right now but that doesn’t matter. If I write, maybe the dream will come back to me. If not, hey, I feel like I’m about to start something fun.”

Loading up his word document, a goofy smile spreads across Frank’s face “Alright. Let’s see what happens” Frank has no idea why but he looks to the moon outside and winks. After that, he gets to typing.

The End

About *this* release



This book was originally released on Amazon on June 21, 2023, but was removed a few days later at the behest of a seething schizo insecure fascist pseud who doesn't understand what the Streisand Effect is.

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